

LEADING BETWEEN THE FAULT LINES:
LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES
FOR MINISTRY IN WOUNDED CONGREGATIONS

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Dedication

This thesis project is dedicated to:

My wife, *Christy*. I am amazed by the intensity of your loyal love and selfless sacrifices for me and our family. Who I am and who our family is today is the result of your dedicated commitment to wanting the best for our family above your own desires and needs. Our Lord has truly blessed me to provide such a beautiful and godly wife in you.

My grandparents, *Rodman and Edna Stahl*. They had a significant impact on my life from an early age through their Christ-like example and their prayers. For forty years they prayed daily for a son to go into the ministry. I am the answer to their prayers.

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have yet to find in our present ministry location some trusted and caring friends as special and as these precious ones are to us.

Abstract

When a church goes through a crisis such as a painful church split or clergy misconduct, the impact can adversely affect the spiritual, relational, and emotional health of the congregation. This trauma has been compared to the common experience of survivors from an earthquake. The victims are bombarded by feelings of shock, grief, loss, insecurity, confusion, anger, and anxiety about the future. The emotional system of the congregation often becomes disoriented and chronically anxious, leading to further aftershocks and fractures within the church fellowship.

Ministry to wounded congregations presents a unique challenge for the recovery leader, since the practices and skill sets of traditional pastoral ministry will not necessarily apply to the needs and crises within the troubled church family. Likewise, most contemporary models of leadership are inadequate for this unique ministry condition. A different model and approach is needed to “lead between the fault lines” of the wounded congregation.

The Apostle Paul’s Christ-centered ministry practice when handling controversies and conflicts within the Corinthian church provides a useful biblical leadership paradigm for recovery ministry in a wounded congregation. His leadership metaphors in Second Corinthians also illustrate a leadership model that exercises the right balance of authority and power in a difficult ministry situation.

The recovery leader will also benefit from recent research insights on the challenges and common experiences of pastors who minister in wounded congregations. Another field of study involves resolving interpersonal and spiritual conflicts within troubled churches, regardless if these issues precipitated the earthquake or perpetuate aftershocks within the congregation. Family systems theory provides a helpful tool for understanding the relational dysfunction at work under the surface of the wounded congregation. Finally, applying change agent theory within the congregational system is another useful concept for recovery ministry. An internally driven leader will stay relationally connected to the emotional system of the congregation while initiating positive change toward health and mission in the recovery process.

The project design of this thesis consists of interviews with select people who have experience and/or expertise in various facets of ministry to wounded congregations. Insights from these interviews are incorporated into a recommended plan for organizing a recovery team to assist the recovery leader’s implementation of a ministry plan in the wounded congregation.

Chapter 1: The Problem and Its Setting

I. Congregations living at the epicenter of an ‘earthquake’ encounter

A. How an earthquake happens

A severe earthquake and its aftershocks are one of the most frightening phenomena of nature to experience. Earthquakes are nearly impossible to predict because their origin lies hidden below the surface. Deep underground, large tectonic plates are in constant motion due to the convection currents that radiate from the earth’s mantle, the molten rock level below the earth’s crust. When these tectonic plates lock together, pressure builds at certain stress points along the fault lines of these plates. Eventually enough energy accumulates to force these plates to break free, causing a violent vibration on the earth’s surface—the eruption of an earthquake.

An earthquake can be a very traumatic experience for those living near its epicenter. Not only do they face the possibility of physical harm and loss of property, but there is also a great deal of emotional trauma associated with this unexpected natural disaster. A once settled and secure lifestyle becomes radically disrupted, leaving the victims with feelings of insecurity, loss, and instability, as well as fear and uncertainty about the future.

B. Congregations in crisis: experiencing trauma at the epicenter

At times, congregations can also experience an earthquake-like shockwave. These unsettling events are often triggered by congregational trauma caused by a church split, the forced exit of pastoral staff, or the financial mismanagement or moral failure of a leader in the church. Though people react differently to the traumatic event, the underlying impact is often the same. This unexpected crisis can set off a wide array of

emotions within the congregation—shock, anger, confusion, grief, loss, mistrust, betrayal, and fear. The congregation’s once stable and secure relational environment is violently disturbed. Feelings of mistrust and betrayal are visible signs of the invisible wounds that now inflict the church family. This traumatic incident also produces feelings of helplessness that cannot be resolved without the proper diagnosis and treatment.

The emotional and relational pain experienced in wounded congregations by these “earthquake” events is very real and personal. Deborah Pope-Lance states that

the behaviors and reactions of individuals who have experienced or witnessed clergy misconduct resemble those victims who have experienced trauma such as tornados, train wrecks, random violence, and rape. In congregations, the chronic, intractable organizational dysfunctions that often follow clergy misconduct are similar to the reactions or communities and organizations that collectively experienced a traumatic event. The trauma of clergy misconduct inflicts significant personal and institutional loss (Gaede, 48).

Likewise, congregations that witness a church split can suffer devastating relational consequences. Ron Susek labels these church conflicts as ‘firestorms:’

Once the firestorm erupts, chances of a good recovery virtually disappear. Experience suggests that the window of opportunity for strong corrective action is open only thirty to ninety days. After that, deep losses are almost inevitable. The reason is that this inflamed level of conflict quickly destroys good people while hardening evil people... When a firestorm ignites, there is an almost overnight collapse of reason, negotiation, tolerance, love, and forgiveness. Factions take on a ‘we are right, and they are the enemy’ mind-set (Susek, 44).

Sometimes these wounds that congregations acquire from their ‘earthquake’ experience may take a long time to heal. Pope-Lance comments that “the damage done by clergy misconduct to the office of ministry within an organization or congregation is pervasive and persistent. Healing after misconduct may take as much as a decade if not a generation to accomplish” (Gaede, 63).

Why do deeply wounded congregations usually take such a long time to recover?

The nature of recovery from these deep-seated wounds is best explained by a living system theory approach applied to congregational trauma. According to this theory, a congregation is more than just a collection of individual members. The people in the church are intricately interconnected, where each person both influences and is influenced by the others. This happens because they exist in a system that is much bigger and more powerful than its individual members. When a serious conflict adversely impacts a church, the collective emotional and behavioral systems of that congregation are traumatized, creating an unbalanced feeling of anxiety within the church. This emotional state of a wounded congregation is called chronic anxiety.

Chronic anxiety may be triggered in a system by some particular incident or issue, but once under way it develops a life of its own, independent of the triggering mechanism. It continues to be generated by our reaction to one another and to the disturbance in the relational system. Once chronic anxiety hits the system, we live in a heightened chemical state of anxiety that prevents us from functioning at our best and sets us up to escalate additional symptoms of one sort or another (Herrington, 36).

When people become anxious because their sense of security and stability is threatened, the usual response is called reactivity. “Reactivity is the emotional expression of people’s sense of threat” (Richardson, 91). There are four basic emotional and behavioral patterns that develop in congregations that experience chronic anxiety caused by a traumatic incident: relational conflict, emotional distancing, overfunctioning and underfunctioning, and projection of anxiety upon one another (Herrington, 57-62). More details will be given on each of these conditions in chapter three.

There is no quick fix or simple solution that will miraculously heal chronic anxiety within the congregational system. Overcoming these systemic dysfunctions

requires a unique understanding and approach to bring recovery and healing to wounded congregations.

II. Leading Between the Fault Lines

A. The recovery leader's unique role

A wounded congregation requires a unique leadership paradigm and strategy to help move the people through the recovery process to restore the church's hope and mission for the future. Most contemporary models of leadership (i.e., business CEO, coach, or therapist) are inadequate for this kind of leadership challenge. New leadership metaphors and models are needed to address the specific nature of this ministry context. The recovery leader does not begin his ministry in a wounded congregation on level ground, i.e., like with a fresh start in a new ministry assignment. The relational topography of a wounded congregation is often filled with many relational fractures and fault lines lying hidden under the surface. These issues must be identified and addressed before the congregation's infrastructure and ministry can be rebuilt on a stable foundation.

Deborah Pope-Lance believes that leaders called to intervention and restoration ministry in wounded congregations can be likened to that of EMT specialists when entering an earthquake zone after a community has been devastated. A clear recognition of one's role and responsibilities is essential when encountering the multiple wounds and needs that cry out for help in a wounded congregation. Compassion, patience, and resilience are important qualities that must be demonstrated to restore pastoral trust and to rebuild hope for the future. This is especially true if the former pastor was at the epicenter of the congregation's trauma.

Pastors serving in the aftermath of a predecessor's misconduct often feel like emergency medical responders at an accident. First on the scene, emergency medical responders often feel compelled to attend to everything; however, training and experience teach them that they must not. Emergency medical responders should not be moving debris from damaged automobiles out of the way or directing traffic but should be doing the job of medical responders—tending to the accident victims' medical emergencies. In the aftermath of misconduct, afterpastors, taking a cue from emergency medical responders, need to understand that they cannot do everything. Rather, afterpastors must do the job of pastor, restoring trust in the person and office of the minister (Gaede, 53).

B. Recovery ministry's unique challenges and stresses

Ministry as a profession is challenging and stressful in itself with its variety of relational roles and responsibilities within a congregation. However, it is especially so for the leader who takes on a recovery ministry assignment to a wounded congregation. Engaging in this process will make special demands upon the recovery leader. At times, the leader may become a "lightning rod" for the pain, anger, and dysfunction that has been internalized because of the trauma. Darlene Haskin observes that "the afterpastor is often the target of the anger or rage that members of the congregation are unwilling to admit exists. The afterpastor becomes a sort of magnet" (Hopkins, 157).

At times, the leader's authority may also be questioned and challenged due to fear and anger residing in those who have been wounded. It is important to remember that attacks on one's integrity must not be taken personally. Rather, it is helpful to recognize that the hurt and pain under the surface causes these extreme reactions.

An afterpastor may no longer receive consistent trust and respect and may be held in suspicion, silenced, ignored, or sabotaged. In this way, disappointment, confusion, or anger felt towards the offending cleric is displaced onto the afterpastor (Gaede, 55).

Collateral damage is often inflicted upon the recovery leader due to these unique challenges faced when ministering to a wounded congregation, so it is imperative that the

recovery leader monitors and protects his emotional, spiritual, and physical well being during this intervention process. Darlene Haskin believes that it is imperative that the recovery leader has maintained healthy habits and secure boundaries while engaging in this demanding ministry: “If the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the afterpastor are not attended to, the church will not be helped or served. Openness, self-knowledge, and self-awareness are key to carrying out a healing ministry while remaining healthy” (Hopkins, 161).

C. A biblical model for recovery ministry

Where does one look for a helpful leadership model for recovery ministry? There are few leadership books available today that even address this issue. However, I believe that a practical biblical framework and model for recovery ministry may be found in Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians. This letter is the most revealing of Paul’s comprehension of his identity and role as a ministry leader. The Corinthian congregation challenged Paul’s authority, maligned his appearance, and questioned his motives and his credentials. Rather than asserting his power and authority over the congregation as an Apostle, Paul clarified the unique nature of Christian ministry from a God-centered orientation. Paul used the Greek term *diakonos* and its related terms nineteen times in this letter, which is half of the total occurrences in his writings in the New Testament. His strong pastoral identity was rooted in God, and that vantage point allowed him to withstand the controversies and challenges he faced with this troubled congregation.

Paul’s metaphors for ministry in Second Corinthians challenge our contemporary models of leadership and draw attention to often neglected facets of Christian ministry such as submission, suffering, humility and transparency. For example, in 2 Cor. 2:14,

Paul describes leaders as *Christ's prisoners* being led forth in a public procession, signifying their identity as Christ's possession. Therefore, the Christian leader does not own his ministry, but it is Christ who owns both him and his ministry. In 2 Cor. 4:7, leaders are described as *jars of clay* that contain the treasure of the gospel. This reminds us that the power of our ministry is not intrinsic in ourselves but in the power of the gospel message. In 2 Cor. 5:20, Christian leaders are called *Christ's ambassadors*, indicating that the leader's mission is to represent the one who has sent him. These metaphors reveal different facets of the kind of ministry that are crucial to maintain the leader's proper identity and role in ministry to wounded congregations.

It is also important that the intervention leader has a biblical understanding of exercising power and authority in relation to one's involvement in the recovery process. According to Paul, leadership power and authority are not inherent in a leader, but are imparted through one's dependence upon God. Paul's exercise of power and authority derived from his understanding that God's power was released through his weakness rather than self imposed by his position over others. (See 2 Cor. 12:10)

A thorough grasp of these issues evident in Paul's leadership example and explanation in Second Corinthians can help the intervention leader navigate through the hazards and challenges facing recovery ministry in a wounded congregation. These leadership concepts will be developed further in chapter two of this thesis project.

III. My Personal Journey with Recovery Ministry in Wounded Congregations

This subject of leadership in wounded congregations is not just an academic exercise or an area of curiosity to me. During the past fifteen years I have served in two

congregations that had gone through serious trauma. When I began this journey, I had no training or coaching concerning how to lead a congregation to healing after the devastation of their “earthquake” experience. Much of what I have learned came through painful lessons of leading them through the confusion and controversy to a place of stability and security. Here is a record of my personal journey with recovery ministry to wounded congregations to set the stage for the rest of this thesis project.

A. Recovery Ministry in East Dennis, MA (September 1992 to August 2001)

My journey in recovery ministry began as an interim pastor in the East Dennis Community church. I had recently resigned from a Baptist church on Cape Cod. We intended to move back to Pennsylvania to live with family while I searched for a new ministry assignment. However, my wife, Christy, had complications with premature bleeding while twenty weeks pregnant with our third daughter. Her doctor told us that we should wait until our baby was born before we moved out of the area.

The East Dennis Community Church had a long and diverse history since its beginning in 1814. The congregation was organized as the Reformed Methodist Society of Dennis and Brewster during the Second Great Awakening that swept through New England. Over the years, the church served as the hub of the social and spiritual life of the Quivet Neck village in the town of Dennis. In 1970, the church severed its ties with the Reformed Methodist Church to become a non-denominational congregation known as the East Dennis Community Church.

The congregation went through an “earthquake” experience in 1991 that split the church right down the middle. Their pastor of fourteen years resigned due to a leadership conflict within the Elder Board. Three elders attempted to force the pastor to leave

without involving or informing the congregation. After several months of leadership paralysis within the Elder Board, a church consultant was hired to appraise the situation and propose a solution to this impasse. Unfortunately, the consultant had overestimated the intensity and breadth of the opposition against the pastor. He recommended that the entire Elder Board, including the pastor should resign, and for the congregation to establish an interim council to direct the church toward their future. Though this proposal was agreed to by the leadership and congregation, it did not resolve the underlying conflict that continued to polarize the church. Many members took sides regarding their preferred future of the church's leadership and direction.

Since I was seeking a ministry position and they were looking for an interim pastor, I agreed to serve a one year term as the interim pastor of their church. I believed that my relational style of ministry would help bring healing to this wounded congregation. What I did not realize at the time were the deeper issues under the surface that perpetuated this congregation's cycle of trauma and conflict. I later learned that some of these spiritual and relational dynamics had dated back to an earlier conflict and controversy over twenty years before the most recent disruption.

I began my ministry as their interim pastor in September 1992. My first task was to bring stability and healing to the divisions within the congregation. The Elder responsible for initiating the previous conflict continued to disrupt the congregation and undermine the new Elder Board's authority. As a result, we had to exercise church discipline to remove him and his disruptive influence from our congregation. This action caused even more people to leave because they believed that we were not demonstrating Christian love and forgiveness to the offending church member. Within the first month of

my ministry, the secretary and the music director/ organist both resigned and left the church, leaving us to fill some significant gaps in our ministry. The ninety people who remained held on to a thin thread of hope while they watched the fabric of what was once a strong, vibrant congregation continue to unravel.

However, during the first six months of my ministry, we watched the Lord do a special work of bringing healing and restoring hope within our church family. New people stepped up to serve in the ministry gaps left by those who had departed. The atmosphere of heaviness that hung over the congregation in our worship services was displaced by a growing sense of hope and enthusiasm about our future together. Our worship services became more personal and relational. We shared our joys and sorrows with one another as we looked to Christ as the Head of our church. When a Search Committee was formed to begin their investigation for a permanent pastor, I was asked if I was willing to be considered among their candidates. In most interim situations, the interim pastor is not to be considered as an available candidate for a pastoral vacancy. However, after much prayer and discussion, we came to a mutual agreement that my leadership gifts and ministry style matched what the congregation needed in the next phase of their life and ministry. In February 1993, the congregation voted unanimously to affirm me as the pastor of the East Dennis Community Church.

Unfortunately, the root issues of the church's future identity and direction were still not resolved. More relational fractures and after shocks continued for several years. A few months following my installation as the pastor, two Elders intended to convert our congregation from a traditional church structure to a pure cell church orientation. Following this ministry approach would have alienated many of our older members that

were not actively involved in our home fellowship groups. We faced an impasse over the identity and direction of the church, and the momentum in the church dissipated. After several months of trying to resolve our differences of philosophy of ministry and the personality conflicts that developed among the Elder Board and our wives, these two families left the church in the summer of 1994, along with a few members who were their close friends.

Two new Elders were appointed to the Board in the fall of 1994, and once again we began to rebuild a sense of momentum in the church. But by the spring of 1995, another faction within the leadership attempted to pressure the church to become more Pentecostal in our orientation. At the time, we were a blended congregation with both Evangelical and Charismatic backgrounds. Though we were open to the benefits of both traditions, there was not any intentional pressure to move people in either direction. However, the manner in which some members felt coerced by others created more tension and alienation in the church body. After another few months of unproductive attempts to resolve this disagreement among the leadership, three more families left our church, including two more of our Elders.

After experiencing this second aftershock within our church leadership over our church's identity and direction, I knew we needed to clarify a clear sense of our identity and direction for the future. We had to learn how to respect one another's differences in the peripheral matters of our beliefs, and not to make those differences the most important matters of our faith. We also needed to break free from some of the destructive patterns of communication within the body that undermined our trust with one another. I presented to the congregation a ministry plan to re-establish a unity of spirit and purpose

within the congregation. I also proposed that we consider joining a denomination or association of like-minded churches for the purpose of accountability and support. At this time there was no interest in the majority of the congregation to pursue affiliating with a larger church body. Nevertheless, still I believed that this was a necessary step for clarifying our congregation's future, and I continued to pray about how and when to lead this congregation into this next step toward affiliation.

A year passed before I brought up the matter again to the Elder Board. I asked them just to pray about the possibility of affiliation with a like-minded organization. At this point I had no leaning as to which affiliation to pursue, as long as it helped us clarify our identity as a church and our accountability to a larger body of believers beyond the local church. One Elder was so upset that he said he wouldn't even pray about it, and that he would leave the church if we ever considered the proposal! Eventually, he did leave—to attend a nearby denominational church.

However, I did not believe that the Lord wanted me to abandon this proposal. I sensed that this was a main reason why the Lord still kept us here in this church. I felt that part of my ministry assignment was to shepherd this congregation through the trauma of their church split and into their next phase of life and ministry, which would include healing from its past reputation with a new identity and mission for its future.

My leadership perseverance was realized when, in 1997, the Elder Board presented a proposal to the congregation that we affiliate with the Evangelical Free Church of America. As we personally investigated the history and distinctives of the EFCA, we believed that our congregation would match up well with its doctrine and mission. We also sensed that affiliation with the EFCA would provide the needed

accountability and support to help keep us from being pulled in different directions in the future due to our congregation's independent, non-denominational status.

After conducting several months of regular congregational meetings to discuss the process and ramifications of affiliation, our congregational vote was nearly unanimous in favor to join the EFCA. That decision was confirmed at the New England District annual meeting in March 1998, when we were approved as an Evangelical Free congregation.

Over the next year and a half, we began the process of making changes to reflect our new identity and affiliation. We officially changed our church's name to the Evangelical Free Church of East Dennis, we attended the district conferences, and I participated in the district pastoral meetings. By the year 2000, our congregation was stable and free of all relational conflicts and controversy. We experienced an atmosphere of genuine warmth and caring within the church family. In fact, some members who had left our church earlier during the earthquake and aftershocks would sooner turn to someone in our congregation when in need rather than to others in their new church family.

At this point, I began to feel restless that my ministry was coming to a close in this congregation. My original one year interim pastor commitment to the East Dennis congregation had expanded into nine years of pastoral ministry there. Christy and I sensed that it was time to consider moving closer to family back in Pennsylvania. Though other ministry possibilities were available in New England, we wanted to return to the area where we had both been raised.

While I was pondering what my role would be for the future this church, I sensed that the Lord asked me, *"Are you willing to be middle relief rather than the closer?"* I

had been a pitcher in my baseball career of my earlier years. I knew that the pitchers who often received the attention and the glory were the starters and the closers. However, at times when the game was on the line, a middle relief pitcher filled a vital task in covering the innings between the starter and the closer roles. Otherwise, the game could be lost. What I sensed that God was saying to me through this question was this—was I willing to let someone else experience the fulfillment of the restoration work that I had begun in this congregation rather than wanting to realize it by myself? Once I settled this issue of surrendering my claim upon this recovery ministry, God opened up circumstances for us to consider a move to another ministry assignment.

B. Recovery Ministry in York, PA (September 2001 to present)

During a school vacation week in February 2001, we visited relatives in Pennsylvania. While we were there, I set up an appointment with the Eastern District Superintendent, Rev. Paul Meiners, to see if there were any openings in E. Free Church congregations in eastern PA. Paul told me that there was a pastoral opening in a church in York. However, this congregation had gone through the trauma of the moral failure of the senior pastor, and a painful church split followed when some members wanted him to return to leadership after he had resigned from the church.

We were already familiar with the general area since my wife's relatives were from York. I was open to the possibility of serving in that kind of setting since I already had experience in recovery ministry in the East Dennis congregation, so Paul forwarded my resume and profile to the leadership and search committee of the Immanuel E. Free Church.

The search committee first contacted me in May for a phone interview. In early June, on my way down to my Doctor of Ministry residency class in Charlotte, NC, I visited their worship service and met with the search committee for lunch. Two weeks later, on my way back home, I returned to meet with the Elder Board. Both of these meetings were very positive, and we had a sense of excitement that the Lord was bringing our paths together. Two weeks later our family visited the church for a candidating weekend. On July 15, the congregation voted to call me as their next pastor. In just over a month later, we were on our way to begin a new chapter of our family and ministry back in Pennsylvania.

The Immanuel Evangelical Free Church began as a Bible study in 1981. Its founding pastor had an energetic and magnetic personality that drew many new believers to the church. The worship style was contemporary with informal dress encouraged. The composition of the congregation was predominantly families with young children. Before his resignation in August 2000, the church averaged over 200 in their worship services. However, by the time I arrived the congregation size was down to around 120.

Though their initial earthquake experience had occurred over a year earlier, the signs of shock and fatigue were still clearly evident in the congregation. The Elder Board was battle weary, having endured many long meetings, and having faced many difficult decisions while clearing away the rubble from the aftermath of their earthquake experience. Some of the elders felt attacked and criticized by members who didn't agree with their decisions. Much administrative work was needed to recover from the congregational conflicts that surfaced after their pastor resigned. The church had called a retired pastor, Dr. Robert Gustafson, to serve as their interim pastor during the early

recovery stages and search for their next pastor. Robert's pastoral wisdom and experience helped them to stay focused on the necessary responsibilities required to keep the church on track during his interim ministry.

For the first several months of my ministry at Immanuel, I worked hard to restore pastoral trust in this congregation by being transparent and accountable. I voluntarily submitted monthly ministry reports to the Elder Board to keep them informed on the day to day details of my ministry. I also spent many hours meeting with people still traumatized from their "earthquake" experience. Some told me that it was hard for them to trust me because they had felt so betrayed by their former pastor. Some leaders were still fearful that he would try to return to the church and stir up more trouble.

What I least expected to encounter was the backlash of displaced anger from several members toward me as the pastoral leader of the church. The office of pastor had been seriously damaged in this congregation, so some were suspicious that I had a hidden agenda, and they challenged and questioned my motives and actions. Unfortunately, my family also suffered some personal attacks by members though they had done nothing to deserve them. These were some of the painful aftershocks from the initial betrayal during the early stages of my recovery ministry.

By the middle of the year 2002, more relational conflicts began to surface. Tensions between the two paid staff women and their husbands threatened to disrupt the church's forward progress. I attempted to mediate between them, but some of their issues were deep and long standing, making it difficult for them to reconcile or trust each other. Several members of the congregation polarized around one or the other's viewpoint,

while others in our church family were oblivious to what was happening. However, the rest of the congregation could sense the tension that was building in our church family.

I met with a seasoned pastor in our area to ask his advice of what I should do about this problem. I felt like I was “over my head” trying to resolve this leadership and staff conflict. He told me that if he were the pastor, he would inform these staff women that either they resolve this dispute immediately or they would both be fired! Though I sensed that he was right, I knew that I didn’t have enough earned leadership capital to enforce this plan of action, especially when one of the husbands was a member of the Elder Board! I spent much time in prayer looking for a spiritual solution to get to the root of these spiritual conflicts causing these aftershocks in our congregation.

A significant spiritual marker for our congregation occurred on January 11, 2003, which was also the twenty-second anniversary of Immanuel’s beginning as a church. I called our church family to set apart this day for a *Setting Your Church Free* prayer service. (I have provided the order and content of this service for further review and reflection in Appendix A.) For three and a half hours, we spent time in worship, sharing our past memories—both the good and the bad, releasing those who had hurt us by extending them forgiveness, confessing our corporate sins, and re-dedicating our church family and facility to serve the Lord’s purposes in the future. Near the end of this service, we spent nearly an hour moving from room to room to pray for cleansing and healing from all the painful meetings and experiences that occurred in those locations.

As I looked out upon the congregation at the end of the service, I could see that some members had experienced freedom from their past trauma that day, while others still struggled under the burden of their past pain and wounds. Within two months, many

of these members—our full-time paid worship director, her husband (an Elder Board leader), two other Elder Board leaders and their families, and several other members—had decided to leave our church.

Within a couple of months of reorganizing and healing from this painful loss, another handful of families also decided to leave our church. The precipitating issues that formed the basis of their decision to leave were peripheral matters, but they treated them as serious offenses that necessitated their departure.

Once again we began the healing and rebuilding phase of recovery. In 2004, new Elders were appointed to fill some vacancies on the Board. In September, the congregation commissioned a Task Force to assist the Elder Board to revitalize our church's ministries. However, differences in perspective and direction surfaced between the chairman of the Task Force and the Elder Board. The Task Force chairman was convinced that the congregation authorized the Task Force to initiate whatever changes they felt were necessary, including changing the name of the church. When the Elder Board did not agree to implement all of their proposals, he felt that the church leadership was blocking the church's progress. I met with him for several hours to listen to his concerns and to share with him the Board's perspective. I thought that we had resolved our differences so that we could work together—only to find out that he later sent out a scathing broadcast email condemning both the Elder Board and the church! This personal attack upon our Elder Board deeply affected a couple of our Elders, and our church's progress once again slowly inched forward while we recovered from yet another attack and setback. However, my greatest leadership challenge was still to come.

By the fall of 2005, some of our Elder Board members were weary from the challenges we had faced over the past few years. Several families in our church had been through difficult health issues or job losses during the year. A couple of our Elders were discouraged that we weren't growing and that we were not meeting our projected budget. While praying for wisdom and direction, I sensed that our ministry theme for the year ahead should be *Ambassadors of a Living Hope* based on 1 Peter 3:15. I told the Board that if they were growing weary to let me "take the ball and run with it." I believed that our congregation was finally ready to turn the corner. We had spent so much time resolving conflicts and fixing problems in the first four years that we were unable to develop an intentional outreach ministry in our community. We were just beginning to see some positive responses from our first outreach efforts that fall, and we had planned several new outreach events for the year ahead.

However, one of our Elders held a personal grudge toward our office manager and tried to find a way to get rid of her. He believed that she was the source of the church's problems. He had also been influenced by a former Elder that left our church earlier with a similar problem with our office manager. When I tried to intervene, it became apparent that I also became a target for his dissatisfaction. As a result, a relational tension grew between the staff and the Elder Board.

By November, it was time to prepare the church budget for the following year. Two Elders convinced the others that severe cuts were necessary for our church to survive in the future, even though we had a surplus in our capital improvement fund of over \$36,000. They circumvented the Finance Committee's budget recommendations and proposed deep cuts to staff and missions, and our outreach ministry was completely

removed from the new budget. At the same time, they highly inflated our property expenses to justify the need for these drastic changes.

When I confronted the Board members about making this severe budget shift, this elder told me that we didn't need an office manager any more. Another Elder told me that he didn't think that I was the right pastor for this church, and that he didn't get anything out of my messages. I told the Board that presenting these drastic cuts in the budget would stir up conflict within the congregation at the annual meeting, and if that if they were going to push this budget, they at least needed to be honest with the congregation about their reasons behind the cuts. Though I still disagreed with this proposed budget, the rest of the Board approved it while I was taking our daughter back to college in New England.

At this point, Christy and I discussed the possibility of resigning before this conflict with the Elder Board led to a church split. Though I knew that I had the strong support of the congregation behind me, we did not want to have to "pick up the pieces" after another church split when others left after causing serious damage to the congregation. Our emotional and physical reserves were not as resilient as when we faced other aftershocks in the early years of our ministry here.

At the annual meeting in January, the Elder Board strongly encouraged the congregation to approve their budget proposal. There was a lot of emotion and confusion present in that meeting. Several objections and concerns were raised by the members, and someone proposed that we postpone this decision until it could be revised at a later time. However, the Elder Board was determined that the congregation approve the budget at that meeting, and the budget was passed on a split vote.

When our annual meeting was over, I sensed that our real trouble was just beginning. Several members expressed disappointment in how the meeting was handled and asked to speak with the Elder Board. The Elder who said that he didn't think that I was the right pastor for the church before the annual meeting tried to cover up his personal attack by expressing his support for my ministry. He wrote me a note to say that now he believed that I was the shepherd to feed them and lead them forward!

The Elder Board became anxious about the growing discontent within the congregation and also with the tension with the staff. In March, we asked our District Superintendent to mediate our conflict before it escalated any further. His analysis of the situation determined that the Elder Board had mismanaged the staff and mishandled the budget process. He affirmed that the EFCA's form of church government was Elder led, but congregational rule—not Elder rule as some had supposed. Therefore, he recommended that the Elder Board apologize to the congregation for what they had done and seek to reconcile with the offended parties.

At our next Elder Board meeting on the Monday before Easter, two Elders resigned from the Board and left the church. Two other Elders resigned the following week. The remaining Elder waited until three weeks later to resign at our congregational meeting. He attempted to shift the blame from the Elder Board onto me for the conflict and controversy that developed.

Once again the church suffered another aftershock that split the church. The five Elder families who left were followed by several others in the weeks that followed. The rest of us were in grief and shock at facing another setback when we seemed poised for a

breakthrough. Just before the annual meeting our worship attendance reached its highest point since I came to the church five years earlier.

With no functioning Elder Board in place, I organized a Transition Leadership Team composed of several men who would be potential Elder candidates for the future. This leadership team effectively handled all of the leadership responsibilities of the Elder Board during this transition process. I also asked two former Elders that remained in the church to serve as our advisors, so that their wisdom and support would help to keep us on track as we reorganized the church's infrastructure and set a ministry direction for the future. Still, our financial state was adversely affected by this recent split, and we had to use funds from our surplus account to cover our basic needs during this transition period.

Though our church's recovery process has been steady since this latest aftershock a year ago, this ministry conflict inflicted the most damage to me and my family—due to the facts that we had less emotional reserve than at any other time we faced a crisis in this congregation, and that this betrayal came from those whom we trusted and worked closely.

At our annual meeting this year (January 2007), our congregation unanimously voted to approve our Leadership Team's proposal that our budget be mission-driven rather than expense-driven—a major reversal in the direction from the previous year's Elder Board. The cuts in last year's budget for outreach and my retirement fund were restored, and I received a salary increase for the first time since 2003. We also unanimously elected two new Elders so that the Elder Board is now the functioning leadership board of the congregation. However, this time, our Elders have expressed their desire to have greater congregational input into the vision and direction of our future

ministry plans. This renewed enthusiasm for our congregation's future and their growing concern that we reach out to the community around us are encouraging signs that we have turned the corner and are now on the road to recovery.

IV. Project Design

In my recovery ministry experience in two wounded congregations, I had few available resources to assist me through the personal and professional challenges I faced in these congregations. Through my research, surveys, and interviews with others who have been associated with or affected by this kind of ministry experience, I hoped to gain a more comprehensive grasp of the unique nature of recovery ministry in wounded churches. This information can be made available to other recovery leaders who take on similar ministry challenges.

A. General surveys

1. *Pastoral survey*- I have designed a survey for pastors who have had experience in wounded churches to identify the following issues relating to recovery ministry:

- the precipitating sources of the trauma
- the collateral damage caused by the trauma (congregational, personal, family)
- the leadership challenges faced
- familiarity with resources and strategies for recovery ministry

The data gathered from these surveys will help to determine pastoral experience in dealing with ministry to wounded congregations as well to identify the knowledge and skills that were understood and implemented in recovery ministry. I also will follow up

some of the survey responses with a more thorough interview to provide more detail about pastors' experience in ministry to wounded congregations.

2. *Congregational survey*- I have designed a survey for church members who have been through congregational trauma to determine their initial thoughts and feelings about the precipitating event and their experiences in the process of recovery. These responses will help ministry leaders understand the kind of thoughts and feelings that congregational members in an “earthquake” experience.

B. Personal interviews:

1. I will follow up on selected pastoral survey responses to reveal more in depth answers to responses.

2. I intend to conduct interviews with individuals who have been involved with various facets of recovery ministry to wounded congregations. Understanding the nature and experience of recovery ministry to wounded congregations through their experience will provide helpful insights for those engaging this kind of ministry.

- Rev. Ron Susek (evangelist)- author of *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflicts*.
- Rev. Paul Meiners- District Superintendent of the Eastern District Association, EFCA.
- Rev. John Myers- Church Health and Church Planting Director of the Eastern District Association, EFCA.
- Rev. Omar Zook- Omar is a pastoral counselor who works with pastors who have been hurt by troubled churches.

- Dr. Eugene Heacock- Executive Director of the Sandberg Leadership Center, Ashland Theological Seminary.

3. Personal surveys and interviews with church members who have been through a congregational “earthquake” experience.

V. Outcomes:

My goal for this thesis project is to develop a resource guide for leaders in recovery ministry based upon the research and interviews gleaned from this study. This guide would provide insights and point to other resources that may be helpful for recovery ministry to wounded congregations.

VI. Working Terminology

Two leadership terms that I will regularly use in this thesis project are *afterpastor* and *recovery leader*. An *afterpastor* is a technical term that is often used of an intentional interim pastor who serves in a congregation that has suffered from a clergy sexual misconduct situation. On the other hand, *recovery leader* is the more generic term that I will use of the pastoral leader who serves in a wounded congregation.

In this thesis project, I have not intentionally limited the ministry of recovery leaders in a gender specific way. However, I have chosen to consistently use the third person pronoun “he” when referring to the recovery leader.

Chapter 2: Biblical and Theological Foundation

I. The importance of a biblical theology of ministry for recovery ministry

Any leader who takes on the challenge of recovery ministry must have a firm grasp of his identity and role as a pastor before entering the ‘earthquake zone’ of the wounded congregation. Since the congregation’s relational system is no longer stable ground for a typical ministry approach, the recovery leader must be firmly grounded in a biblical theology of ministry to withstand the many congregational “aftershocks” that may follow an “earthquake” experience.

Some people will be determined not to be betrayed or abused again by a pastoral leader, and so they will deliberately resist and mistrust anyone placed in a position of authority over them. On the other side of the spectrum, there are other members who will expect the pastor to quickly bury their painful past and initiate a fresh start for their congregation’s future. The pressures to give in to these diverse role expectations and reactions within the wounded congregation can pull a recovery leader in conflicting directions. Allowing wounded members to influence and determine the recovery leader’s identity and agenda will lead to frustration for the pastor, and possibly a further fracturing within the congregation. The recovery leader must take his cues from God concerning his identity and role while leading between the fault lines of recovery ministry.

In his book *The 21st Century Pastor*, David Fisher underscores the importance of a biblical theology of ministry that guides our pastoral practices rather than relying on popular current methodologies or models that influence our ministry identity and approach:

What is most curious to me is that evangelicals unquestioningly embrace nontheological ministry models. Some move the model to therapeutic and others

to management models of ministry. In either case, evangelicals tend to think of both the church and ministry in human terms, an unreflective immanence.... Yet a pastoral ministry equipped and empowered for this generation must have a proper biblical and theological base. Methodology without a proper base is dangerous and ultimately powerless. In other words, we had better figure out our identity before we start dealing in the work of the church and the ministry in today's world. We dare not form pastoral roles based on human models, or we will accomplish little for God. (Fisher, 10-11)

There are many passages that provide a solid foundation for a biblical model for church leadership in the New Testament. However, in this thesis project I will focus exclusively on the Apostle Paul's pastoral relationship and correspondence with the Corinthian church. Paul's leadership role as an apostle and church planter in Corinth involves some unique situations that are not applicable to the average pastor's ministry experience. However, I believe that there are similarities in how he handles his pastoral relationship with the Corinthian congregation that parallel a recovery leader's ministry of within a wounded congregation.

II. Paul's relationship and correspondence with the Corinthian believers

The Apostle Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians is a rich biblical resource for identifying and clarifying the issues of pastoral identity and the exercise of spiritual authority in congregational ministry. In his correspondence with the Corinthian church, Paul encountered several problems that parallel the unique ministry challenges of recovery ministry. Of all the churches that the Apostle Paul founded on his missionary journeys, his relationship with the church in Corinth appears to be the most demanding.

Second Corinthians reveals the heart of a pastor who has a clear-cut grasp of the nature of his calling and ministry, and also a deep concern for the people to whom he has been entrusted to lead into maturity in the Christian life. As such, this epistle will be a

helpful resource for recovery leaders ministering to wounded congregations. Paul Barnett states the benefit of Paul's theology of ministry revealed in Second Corinthians for pastors and ministry leaders today:

Thus the greater part of his teachings about ministry stand as a model and an inspiration to subsequent generations of missionaries and pastors. His comments about ministry—that at its heart lie endurance and patience, sacrifice and service, love of the churches, fidelity to the gospel, sincerity before God, and, above all, a rejection of triumphalism with its accompanying pride—remain throughout the aeon to shape and direct the lives of our Lord's servants. Paul's ministry as sufferer and servant is precisely modeled on that of Jesus, and finds its legitimacy in the face of detraction and opposition for just that reason, as also must ours, if that is our calling. Thus, 2 Corinthians may be bracketed with the Pastoral Letters in its applicability to the work of those whose vocation it is to serve God as his ministers. (Barnett, 50)

A. Historical background

Understanding the intent of Paul's correspondence with the Corinthian believers in Second Corinthians requires a brief history of his relationship with the Corinthian church. An investigative study of Acts and Paul's letters to the Corinthians reveals the following sequence of events leading up to the writing of this letter.

Paul's ministry in Corinth recorded in Acts 18:1-17, began in the spring of A.D. 51 while on his second missionary journey. He settled in Corinth for a year and a half working as a tentmaker and preaching to the Jewish people about Christ in the synagogue. After Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia to join him, Paul spent his full time preaching to the Jews about Jesus. When resistance developed from the Jewish community, Paul expanded his ministry to the Gentiles in Corinth. The result was that many Jews and Gentiles responded to the gospel and were baptized. This nucleus of new believers became established as the church in Corinth.

In the fall of A.D. 52, Paul sailed to Ephesus with Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:18). Priscilla and Aquila remained in Ephesus while Paul continued on to Jerusalem. While in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila met a Jew named Apollos, whom they instructed in a greater explanation of the gospel about Jesus Christ. Apollos was later sent to teach the believers in Achaia (Acts 18:27).

While Apollos ministered in Corinth in the fall of A.D. 53 (Acts 19:1), Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey. He sent the Corinthian church a letter mentioned in First Corinthians 5:9-11, which was subsequently misunderstood by the Corinthians. He learned of their misunderstanding of his letter and of other problems troubling the Corinthian church from members of Chloe's household (1 Cor. 1:11) and a delegation sent to him from the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor. 16:17). Paul wrote First Corinthians (his second letter to the church) to address these practical and theological matters.

Apparently, these problems in the church went unresolved, necessitating his second visit to Corinth. This trip was likely the "painful visit" mentioned in Second Corinthians 2:1. After Paul returned to Ephesus, he sent a third letter to the Corinthians—a "painful letter" through Titus (2 Cor. 2:3-4; 7:8-9).

Paul left Ephesus in the spring of A.D. 56 following a riot incited by the silversmiths (Acts 19:23-41). He was anxious to hear news of how the Corinthian church received his correspondence, so he planned to meet Titus in Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:12-13). Titus told Paul that what he wrote was received positively by the majority of the believers (2 Cor. 7:5, 6). However, a group remained within the fellowship that was opposed to

Paul's leadership, having been seduced by false apostles who wanted to exert their leadership within the congregation (2 Cor. 11:1-6, 12-13).

From Macedonia Paul wrote his fourth letter to the Corinthian church, Second Corinthians, to address the concerns that Titus shared with him about the Corinthian church, and to prepare them for another visit to resolve these issues in Corinth. Paul made his third trip to Corinth during the winter of A.D. 56-57 (Acts 20:2-3).

B. Paul's correspondence with the Corinthian church

Of all of Paul's letters, Second Corinthians is the most difficult to understand. In fact, some scholars believe that this letter was actually a collection of several letters Paul sent to the Corinthian church that were combined at a later time. For example, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor believes that the bitter tone of chapters 10 to 13 is better explained if it was written subsequently to chapters 1 to 9 (Murphy-O'Connor, 11).

However, Scott Hafemann presents two noteworthy evidences that support the unity of this letter. First of all, Paul wrote to the Corinthian church with a dual purpose: "In it, Paul strengthens the repentant minority, while at the same time seeking to win back the resistant minority. Moreover, behind the Corinthians stand Paul's opponents, whom he addresses indirectly throughout his letter as the immediate source of the current problem." (Hafemann, 21) A second convincing argument is that the external witness of the manuscript evidence supports its unity: "There is no manuscript evidence that 2 Corinthians ever contained less than or more than its present content or that its sections were in any other order than they are now" (Hafemann, 32).

C. The literary structure of Second Corinthians

The structure and transitions of Second Corinthians make sense when understood

in light of the occasion and intent for which Paul penned this letter. Paul's overriding theme permeates this letter from beginning to end—that God's power is manifested through suffering and weakness to reveal his glory through Paul's ministry. This theme reaches its climax in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, where Paul declares,

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

There are three main divisions in this epistle:

- Paul reveals his character through the nature of his apostolic ministry in chapters 1 to 7.
- Paul encourages the Corinthian church to fulfill their promise to provide a financial contribution for the poor in Jerusalem in chapters 8 and 9.
- In the final section, chapters 10 to 13, Paul confronts the resistant minority who have challenged and undermined his leadership and authority over the Corinthian believers as an apostle and the founder of the church.

III. Paul's Pastoral Identity in Second Corinthians

A. Paul's theology of ministry revealed in Second Corinthians

This letter contains more autobiographical material than any of Paul's other writings, and it reveals more of Paul's heart than his brilliant mind. His style of writing in this epistle lacks the lucid, logical flow of thought found in his doctrinal treatise on salvation in his letter to the Romans. Instead, Second Corinthians is filled with a series of mixed metaphors, broken lines of thought, digressions and sudden shifts in direction and in the intensity of his feelings, as Paul struggles with how to bring gentle correction to

this congregation while at the same time defending his leadership over them as their spiritual father and the founder of their congregation.

The Christians in Corinth had accused him of inconsistency and lack of resolve (1:15-19). An investigative reading of Second Corinthians reveals that they had questioned his motives (2:17; 4:2; 6:3; 7:2; 11:7-12) and attacked the adequacy of his leadership and authority over them as an apostle (3:5, 6; 10:10; 11:5, 6; 12:11, 12). Some believers in Corinth also held unrealistic expectations about Paul's personal appearance and his leadership style—they didn't like his looks, his personality, and even his preaching (see 10:1, 7, 10). In Second Corinthians, Paul is forced to defend his personal integrity and his credentials as an apostle (1:12-13; 12:12), while at the same time reaffirming his love and commitment toward this troublesome congregation (2:1-4; 11:2).

Paul uses several important self-descriptions and metaphors in this letter to set forth his legitimacy and authority as an apostle and the founding pastor of the Corinthian church. These leadership concepts carry rich insights for anyone involved in recovery ministry, since many of the same pressures and struggles that Paul faced are experienced when leading between the fault lines of a wounded congregation. What follows is a survey of these important terms and metaphors and an explanation of their application for recovery ministry leaders.

B. Paul's leadership terms used in Second Corinthians

1. Apostle (*apostolos*)

From the very first line of his epistle, Paul identifies himself as “an apostle of Christ by the will of God.” This term is found six times in Second Corinthians (1:1; 8:23; 11:5, 13; 12:11, 12). Though Paul often uses *apostolos* as a self-reference at the

beginning of his letters, it appears that this was also an important title he felt was not recognized by some in the Corinthian church. In his earlier correspondence with the Corinthians, Paul challenged their hesitation to accept his legitimate right to this office: “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord” (1 Cor. 9:1, 2).

The issue of Paul’s apostolic authority is central to this letter, and so Paul establishes from the outset of his correspondence with the Corinthians that his calling and identity as an apostle was determined by God, and not those whom he served in his ministry.

However, it is evident in this epistle that Paul did not view the title of apostle as something to wield over others to force compliance to his leadership. Rather, Paul believed that true apostolic authority was derived from human weakness energized by divine strength. Therefore, he appealed to the Corinthians to respond to his leadership based upon his tender, parental concern for them rather than his title as an apostle: “We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also” (6:11-13).

Sze-kar Wan describes this tension Paul faced in his relationship with the Corinthian church as an apostolic leader:

Paul had to navigate carefully between two competing concerns. On the one hand, he must defend his own apostolic authority, without which his ministry would lose its legitimacy. On the other hand, he must make sure that his personal defense did not absolutize his personal credentials, so much so that his ministry might be reduced to a parade of individual abilities. To match strength for strength with his detractors would have been an endorsement of their operating

premise that ministry is to be authorized by power and strength. If Paul had done that, he might have been able to salvage his personal dignity but would have ultimately lost the debate. Paul resolved this dilemma by stressing that authentic Christian ministry is in fact not characterized by power and strength but by weakness and suffering, specifically the weakness and suffering of Christ (Wan, 14).

2. Minister (*diakonos*)

Another significant term in Paul's letter is *diakonos*, which is translated as minister or servant. Paul clearly identifies himself with this term in 3:6 and 11:23. The use of *diakonos* and its cognates is found nineteen times in Second Corinthians, which represents one half of all of their total occurrences in Paul's writings. In the passage of Second Corinthians 2:12 to 6:13, Paul uses these terms nine times as he defends his status as a minister of Christ, specifically through the new covenant. Timothy Savage believes that Paul used this term because "it is better suited to underscore his humility, not his authority, his service, not his office. While he may commend himself, it is only as a minister of God. His position thus differs markedly from his opponents: he does not seek to glorify himself, but God (4:15; 5:13)" (Savage, 7).

Once again, Paul deliberately chooses not to use a position of authority to exert leadership power upon the Corinthian believers, though he had a legitimate right to do so as an apostle and as their founding pastor. Paul's view of leadership was not to seek being treated as their superior, or to push his way to the front where power and prestige are. Rather, his aim was in voluntarily choosing to minister for Christ as a servant, where surrender and service were found. This perspective often put him at odds with the Corinthians, who appeared to value displays of power and prestige as legitimate symbols of leadership authority.

Wounded congregations often have difficulty trusting those placed in leadership over them after going through an “earthquake” experience, especially if clergy misconduct was the precipitating event causing their trauma. Restoring pastoral trust is one of the first critical tasks of a recovery leader. Those who serve in recovery ministry would do well to follow Paul’s example of humility and consistency revealed in Second Corinthians as he withstood personal attacks and challenges to his leadership while seeking to restore his leadership relationship with the troubled congregation. Deborah Pope-Lance reinforces this point in the following quote:

Afterpastors need to understand that these extreme reactions are not about them, that they have little if anything to do with the person of the minister and everything to do with the office of minister and the deep needs of the parishioner. Often afterpastors can disarm reactive parishioners with grace and good humor, with a nonanxious presence and unshakeable confidence.... Cautiously and strictly maintaining appropriate boundaries of the pastoral role may initially provoke these reactions but ultimately will help diminish them by restoring trust to the office and person of minister and creating opportunities for real ministry to be experienced (Gaede, 58).

IV. Paul’s Leadership Metaphors in Second Corinthians

There is a familiar saying that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” At times, an image speaks more clearly than an attempt to communicate using an abstract concept or theory. By visualizing an image, we can better understand how the parts fit together. The same is true in our understanding of Christian leadership. In Second Corinthians, Paul uses some vivid metaphors to illustrate to the Corinthian church what Christian leadership looks like for him. Each of these metaphors also points to foundational issues that must be understood when involved in recovery ministry to wounded congregations.

A. Christ’s Prisoners (2 Cor. 2:14-16)

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are

to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?

The metaphor that Paul uses here is particularly graphic—an image that would have been well-known to his audience in Corinth—the splendor of a Roman parade that followed a military conquest. Murray Harris provides some of the historical and cultural background behind this image:

The Roman triumph was a victory processions celebrated by Roman generals on their return to Rome after a successful foreign campaign, although the privilege of celebrating a triumph became the prerogative of the emperor... Some significant features of this ostentatious pageant may be briefly sketched. At the head of the procession came the magistrates and the senate, followed by trumpeters and some spoils of wars such as vessels of gold or beaks of ships. Then came the flute players, ahead of white oxen destined to be sacrificed in the temples, along with some representative captives from the conquered territory, including such dignitaries as the king, driven in chains in front of the ornate chariot of the general, the *triumphator* (“the one honored by the triumph”), who wore the garb of Jupiter (*ornatus Iovis*) and carried a scepter in his left hand. A slave held a crown over his head. The victorious soldiers followed, shouting “*Io triumphe!*” (“Hail, triumphant one!”). As the procession ascended the Capitoline Hill, some of the leading captives (usually royal figures or the tallest and strongest of the conquered warriors) were taken aside into the adjoining prison and executed. Sacrifices were offered upon arrival at the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. Livy informs us of the two purposes of a triumph: to thank the gods who had guaranteed the victory and to glorify the valor of the *triumphator* (Harris, 243).

The ironic twist in this image is where Paul views his position in this triumphal procession—not as the victorious military leader, but as a prisoner of the *triumphator*. Paul sees himself as one of Christ’s prisoners, one who has been conquered and sentenced to death! Paul clearly understood that he was Christ’s possession. Therefore, his life and ministry were not his own, but Christ’s who had captured him.

Why would Paul use such a gruesome metaphor to describe his life and ministry? Hafemann states that Paul used this image of being given over or sentenced to death as a metonymy for his experience of suffering for the sake of the gospel. “Far from calling his

apostleship into question, Paul's point in 2:14 is that his suffering, here portrayed in terms of being led to death in the Roman triumphal procession, is the means through which God is revealing himself" (Hafemann, 109-110).

This image is carried on in the following verses to convey another aspect of his surrender and sacrifice for the sake of the gospel:

In 2:14b-16a, Paul continues to describe the nature and function of his ministry metaphorically, this time under the images of a "fragrance" and "aroma." Through Paul's suffering, the "fragrance" of the knowledge of God is being spread everywhere (14b) because Paul is the "aroma of Christ" to God... Many have suggested that these references continue the image of the triumphal procession by picturing the incense that was often carried through the streets as part of the celebration. But both in Judaism and elsewhere in Paul's writings, the images of "fragrance" and "aroma" are sometimes used together or sometimes separately, as synonyms (as they are here), to refer in a technical sense to the odor of a sacrifice pleasing to God (Hafemann, 110).

What is the significance of this metaphor for Christian ministry? Paul understood that as Christ's possession, he did not own himself or his ministry. Therefore, whatever he encountered as a minister of Christ was accepted as part of God's design for his life and ministry as part of the cost of following Christ. An example of how Paul uses this motif to express his ability to see pain and suffering in light of his ministry is found in Second Corinthians 4:8-12:

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

Later, in Second Corinthians 11:23-29, Paul lists the many ways in which he had suffered and struggled to fulfill his ministry as an apostle of Christ:

Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more

severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

Brian Dodd believes that suffering and struggle were necessary components of Paul's ministry, and that this is a dimension of ministry that is often overlooked or unexpected by Christian leaders today:

One of the keys to Paul's effectiveness as a life-giving leader is the tremendous price he paid in personal pain, opposition, and abuse. I get the impression that many Christian leaders think that this was peripheral to Paul's effectiveness, coincidental but not essential. But that is not how Paul sees it. For Paul, the crucified One we preach is congruent with the cruciform life we live" (Dodd, 68). Serving as a recovery leader in a wounded congregation is not without its

personal pain and frustrations. Therefore, taking on the role of a minister of Christ means that we must be willing to pay the price that will come through the process of bringing healing and hope to those traumatized by an earthquake experience.

B. Jars of Clay (2 Cor. 4:7)

A second powerful metaphor of Christian ministry is found in Second Corinthians 4:7: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." This image relates to what Paul understood was the source of his ministry—not in his inadequacies and abilities, but in God's presence and power at work in and through him.

The people in Corinth were disconcerted by Paul. They wanted a leader whom they could admire and respect, one in whose appearance they could take pride. However,

Paul exhibited none of those desirable qualities. Paul reveals some of their criticisms in his letter to the Corinthians. They wanted a leader who would boast of his impressive credentials (11:18-21), which Paul refused to do until near the end of his letter (12:11). Paul remarked that they complained that his physical presence wasn't inspiring (10:10), his preaching was contemptible (10:10) and unpolished (11:6), and that he refused to accept any financial support for his ministry among them (11:7-10, 12:14). None of these criticisms were religious in nature, but instead reflected the cultural overtones and social prejudices of the day.

The things which the Corinthians find so objectionable about their apostle—his failure to boast, his timid personal presence, his amateurish speech, his refusal of support—all represent deliberate attempts by Paul to remain humble before an exalted God. His critics, buoyed by the self-exalting culture in which they live, naturally lament his resolve. Indeed, they regard it as a sign of weakness. Paul accepts this caricature but adds the stunning qualification that is in precisely in such 'weakness'—in his mind, such humble faith—that true power, the power of God, becomes effective in his ministry. The inspiration for this conviction comes from the cross of Christ itself, where the principle of power working in what the world regards as a place of abject weakness receives its most striking manifestation. As a minister of Christ, the same principle must operate in Paul. (Savage, 185)

Ben Witherington explains where Paul's jars of clay metaphor may have been derived from and recognized by his audience:

This may be a reference to the cheap pottery lamps made in Corinth and used for walking about at night. Precisely because of their thinness, these vessels let out more light. This frail form also makes it clear that the light comes from another source, so Paul adds that in his case his frailty ought to make obvious that the power is coming from God and not himself. (Witherington, 386-387)

The value of this metaphor for Christian leaders is that it reminds us that the nature of our ministry, as well as the successes and setbacks that we face in our ministry, is all about God and not about ourselves. God is intensely concerned in that we not confuse where the power comes from for our ministry. At times, members of the

congregation in which we serve may either mistakenly credit the source of success as emanating from us, or they may criticize our weaknesses and failures as undesirable of the one who is called their pastor. Success in ministry can be intoxicating, just as dealing with failure can be devastating. However, the one who maintains this proper perspective of where the source of our ministry comes from will be better able to resist the pull in either of these wayward congregational perceptions.

Faithful Christian leaders have learned that true power and ministry flow from an awareness of God's presence at work through us, rather than due to the leader's perfection or polish. Dodd underscores the value of this metaphor for ministry in today's world:

The word he uses for "weak" (*astheneia*) is an opposite of "self-sufficient." The word he uses for "weak" has quite a range and includes weakness, sickness, illness, flaws and powerlessness. Paul applies the message of the gospel to his leadership style and declares that the way God works through leaders is done in such a manner as to communicate the in-breaking of His kingdom in a world that has idolized the creation and its creatures.

This is what is so wrong, even dangerous, about the recent trend of Christian leaders adopting the "commitment to excellence" fad in the business world. I'm not saying we should have a commitment to schlock, but our excellence is not that which "makes clear" that the power comes from God and not from us. When a commitment to excellence means that ordinary folk are no longer viewed as able to do ministry (as I have seen this trend worked out), we have become more Corinthian and less Christian in our leadership (Dodd, 82).

C. Christ's Ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20)

A third metaphor that gives clarity and focus to ministry as a Christian leader is found in Second Corinthians 5:20: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." Here, Paul covers the issue of the authority of the leader in ministry.

The nature of authority is explained by authors Francis Young and David Ford in their book, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians*:

Authority can for the purposes of this chapter be initially defined as a form of exercise of power which involves the right to power. It entails obedience and so is essentially interactive, a social relationship whose meaning and interpretation are vital to the nature of any community (Young, 207).

Paul understood authority to be relational and interactive, rather than possessing a position or status. The whole letter of Second Corinthians can be seen as an example of Paul's exercise of authority. In fact, in Paul's two letters to the Corinthian church, the subject of power authority was a prominent theme, as he used the term *dynamis* (power) twenty-four times compared to ten times in all of his other letters. For *exousia* (authority) and *exousiazein* (to exercise authority), the figures are five and fifteen occurrences. Why does Paul emphasize these terms in his correspondence with the Corinthians? Young and Ford provide this explanation:

If taken at face value the most striking feature of his language is that it is persuasive, appealing, encouraging, pleading. The reason is clear: the only way Paul can have any effective authority is if the Corinthians recognize it voluntarily, from the heart.... Paul never conceives his authority apart from his conviction that the Corinthians are called by God, share his faith in God, are 'in Christ' and have the Spirit (1:21-22). His relationship with them is part of a more fundamental joint relationship with God (Young, 209).

Whenever authority is an issue, Paul's central appeal is to God. This is because he understands that the source of authority comes from God (10:8), and this authority is *delegated* rather than intrinsic in the Christian leader. This is where the metaphor of being an ambassador of Christ gives substance to the exercise of authority as a representative of Christ.

William Barclay provides a cultural explanation of the meaning and the use of this term, *presbeuo*, "to be an ambassador, to carry out the office of an ambassador":

Roman provinces were divided into two types. One was under the direct control of the senate, the other under the direct control of the Emperor. The distinction was made on this basis—provinces which were peaceful and had no troops in them were senatorial provinces; provinces which were turbulent and had troops stationed in them were imperial provinces. In the imperial provinces, the man who administered the province on behalf of the Emperor was the *legatus presbeutes*. So then, the word in the first place paints a picture of a man who has a direct commission for the Emperor; and Paul regarded himself as commissioned by Jesus Christ for the work of the Church.

....

But *presbeutes* and *legatus* have an even more interesting meaning. When the Roman senate decided that a country should become a province they sent to it ten *legati* or *presbeutai*, that is, *envoys*, of their own number, who along with the victorious general, arranged the terms of peace with the vanquished people, determined the boundaries of the new province, drew up a constitution for its new administration, and then returned to submit what they had done for ratification by the senate. They were men responsible for bringing others into the family of the Roman Empire. So Paul thinks of himself as the man who brings to others the terms of God, whereby they can become citizens of his empire and members of his family (Barclay, 209,210).

An ambassador was sent to a foreign land to live among people who speak a different language. Therefore, he was responsible for building relational bridges between the foreigners and the one who had commissioned him for that ministry. In Paul's view, he received a direct commission from God to offer this ministry of reconciliation to those who were not under God's terms of peace. Inherent in this responsibility was the delegated authority of the ruler that the ambassador speaks and acts on his behalf. So Paul declared that God authorized him to present his appeal to the Corinthian believers through his ministry: "Be reconciled to God."

Embedded in this metaphor is the concept of spiritual authority in the pastor's ministry. Spiritual authority is delegated through the pastor as he represents Christ's ministry to the people. It is important that the recovery leader understands this concept so that he will not succumb to the pressure to always please the members in the wounded congregation, since there are times when it is necessary to confront sin, harmful personal attitudes, and conflicts that undermine the recovery process in the congregation.

At the same time, this authority must be exercised with great care so as not abuse one's position of authority over the people. The pastor has solid footing for the exercise of authority in the church as long as it is the extension of the ministry of Christ to his people.

Brian Dodd shares this significant leadership insight into how a pastor must balance this tension between leading and serving the congregation:

Sometimes it is difficult for caring pastors to keep a balance between serving people and pleasing them. Bob Schaper, a seminary professor of mine, taught me a motto that has helped me keep the balance between obedience to Christ and a servantlike posture towards people: *I am your servant, but you are not my master.*

....

This reminder has helped me maintain a servant stance, even when dealing with the power brokers that we too often find in leadership positions in the church. It is liberating to realize that I am free in Christ to serve you, even if you demand it of me. One thing I keep clear: I take my marching orders from a single Master. Yet I maintain complete submission to my lord Jesus by maintaining a servant stance toward others (Dodd, 57).

V. Applying Paul's Leadership Model in Second Corinthians in Recovery Ministry

In Second Corinthians, Paul balances his exercise of leadership authority with grace and humility. This is an excellent model to follow for anyone involved in recovery ministry. Other contemporary models of leadership fall short of this perspective because their authority base is not connected to Jesus Christ as the Head of his church. A wounded congregation needs this kind of spiritual leadership model to restore the congregation's focus on Christ's ownership and authority in the church.

The recovery leader's primary loyalty must be to fulfill Christ's calling and purpose while he serves the church as Christ's servant and representative, rather than to please the people who hired him as the recovery leader. His ministry belongs to Jesus Christ, and Christ is the source from which the leader's power and authority for ministry are derived.

Over the years I have grown in my appreciation of Paul's ability to keep a God-

oriented outlook of his ministry while enduring his leadership conflicts with the troubled Corinthian congregation. There were many times that reflecting upon Paul's leadership metaphors in Second Corinthians helped me keep a Christ-centered perspective of my identity, calling, and my leadership response when undergoing backlash during my recovery ministry experience.

The one to whom we must ultimately answer for the outcome of our ministry is Jesus Christ. Therefore, following Paul's example of looking to him as the focal point of his calling and service has provided me with the motivation and stamina to stay true to my calling when ministering in the wounded congregation.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

I. Ministry Roles and Knowledge Essential for Doing Recovery Ministry

Ministry to a wounded congregation requires a unique set of ministry skills and practices. The foundational tasks of pastoral ministry—preaching, teaching, and pastoral care—are essential practices that cannot be neglected while leading the church to recovery. However, following the traditional caregiver and chaplain roles of pastoral ministry will not in themselves lead a congregation to recovery. The recovery leader must follow a dual path in his ministry strategy. While the recovery leader provides faithful pastoral support to the congregation, he must at the same time become a change agent, a conflict resolution specialist, and a vision-caster for the church's future.

I learned through my ministry experience and research that there are three dynamic ministry roles or functions that a recovery leader should fulfill during the recovery process. First, in the *pastoral role*, I became immersed in the congregation's story and culture to get in touch with their personal struggles, anxieties, and pain. This was a necessary step for leading them in restoring their hope and vision for their future. The recovery leader must become identified with the congregation as a fellow traveler on their faith journey to gain their trust and confidence as he leads them into the future.

A second ministry function involves the recovery leader's *prophetic role* in the congregation through the proclamation ministry of God's Word. The aim of this function is to project a God-centered vision for the congregation's future. I fulfilled this role by reframing their story to reveal God's preferred future for the church. The use of biblical images and metaphors relating to the church can provide a powerful stimulus for a congregation to recapture a renewed vision of their identity and mission for their future.

In Appendix B, I have included a summary of some of my message titles that I preached and taught during my recovery ministry experience. Many of these themes may be helpful for other recovery leaders when developing an intentional preaching and teaching plan for ministering in a wounded congregation.

A third role that I learned must be engaged during the recovery ministry process is that of an *apostolic ministry function*. An apostolic leader has a clear sense of calling directed toward leading the congregation to fulfill its missional identity in the community. I fulfilled this leadership role by developing and implementing practical strategies where we could get involved in outreach to our community as God's ambassadors and witnesses. Recovering this sense of mission for the church was a powerful stimulus for revitalizing the congregation that had been stuck in the trauma of their past.

In a sense, all three of these roles must be ongoing and fluid in the recovery leader's ministry rather than as linear or sequential functions to be implemented. However, there are certain stages during the recovery process where each of these roles must take priority in the progression of one's ministry strategy. An awareness of these three roles and functions provides a conceptual framework for balancing the demands and priorities of recovery ministry.

II. Review of Literature Applicable to Recovery Ministry

During my fifteen years of ministry experience in wounded congregations, I started with no training and few resources available to help me understand and apply these ministry skills and strategies. I knew nothing about how to utilize family system

theory and conflict management in my pastoral ministry, or how to shift a wounded congregation's culture toward recovery. Over the course of time, I accumulated an adequate personal library of resources that were instrumental for shaping my philosophy of ministry and strategy for recovery ministry. In recent years, more research and resources have been published to assist recovery leaders in this unique ministry. In this chapter I have included a summary of some of the best resources covering the main issues and challenges of recovery ministry. In some of these reviews I have quoted intensively from these sources since these insights are crucial for anyone involved in recovery ministry to wounded congregations. The bibliography also lists other references that may prove helpful for anyone pursuing this kind of ministry calling.

A. Congregational Trauma and Conflicts

When a congregation experiences a major traumatic event such as clergy misconduct or a church split, certain relational processes are set into motion that create a corporate sense of loss and instability. It is critical that the recovery leader understands the practical and relational dynamics that must be put in order to stabilize the traumatized congregation. The following resources cover important aspects for the recovery leader to consider and implement in the early stages of his ministry.

1. *When a Congregation is Betrayed: Responding to Clergy Misconduct*- Betty Ann Gaede, Editor

This resource was the newest available and the most comprehensive that I had found for use late in my recovery ministry experience. It was written as a “strategic survival manual” for afterpastors—those who serve in a congregation that has been devastated by clergy misconduct, as well as for the wounded congregation and the

judiciary leaders who work with them. This compilation of several authors' expertise covers a broad range of subjects, such as:

- the best practices to follow after a clergy betrayal is discovered,
- different models for understanding trauma before an intervention strategy is initiated,
- the roles and responsibilities of various participants in the congregation (afterpastors, victims, lay leaders, paid and volunteer staff, clergy colleagues, judicatory leaders, the wider community, and attorneys) involved in the recovery process,
- how to respond to the victim, the offender and family,
- how to prepare for the congregation's future and for a new pastor.

Here are some excerpts that I found especially helpful in understanding the demands and effects of recovery ministry upon the leader and his family.

Common experiences of afterpastors- Deborah Pope-Lance lists several common patterns in afterpastors' experiences that are worth noting. These examples present a clear warning to prospective recovery leaders to count the personal and professional costs involved before taking on this kind of ministry:

Afterpastors say relationships and interactions in their ministries are frequently characterized by distrust and suspicion. Rather than being treated with respect and confidence, they are met with doubt and misgivings. They often feel misheard or unheard by lay leaders and congregants... Some describe being treated rudely or being the object of inexplicable anger and even rage from congregants. Afterpastors report feeling manipulated, coerced, and sabotaged by lay leaders or seeing decisions co-opted or corrupted by poor process or underhanded leadership... Other afterpastors report deliberate, planned undermining of their ministries (Gaede, XVIII).

Recovery leaders may also encounter personal health problems during their ministry in wounded congregations. Since they are often carry the congregation's burden of unresolved grief and anger within the congregation, the high stress level can lead to experiencing some of the following difficulties:

More that a few afterpastors have considered changing professions after serving a betrayed congregation. "I never imagined ministry to be like this," said one. "I feel brutalized and defeated, utterly ineffective. I probably should leave or do something else." Some afterpastors acknowledge feeling depressed.... The stress afterpastors experience is frequently expressed somatically. A previous healthy minister serving a congregation where misconduct has occurred can develop physical ailments. Some afterpastors report trouble sleeping, disturbing dreams, and chronic fatigue. One confessed the need for a daily nap "just to make it through the day." Others complain of physical ailments: frequent colds, sinus conditions and headaches, inexplicable rashes, painful joints and muscles, gastrointestinal problems, and chest pains. A few note an increase in or the return of symptoms of previously addressed or chronic conditions: compulsive eating and weight gain, diabetes, high blood pressure, pain from a previously healed back injury (Gaede, XXI-XXII).

It is important during the recovery process that the recovery leader not only manages his personal and emotional well being, but that he also understands the residual effects that this kind of ministry may have on his family members.

Afterpastor ministries can be tough on personal relationships. Some afterpastors experience difficulties in their marriage or upset among family members. Ministers often rely on their partners or spouses and family members for support. In the face of increased need for support, relationships may suffer. Families often take second place to the church demands on a minister's schedule and attention. Afterpastors and their families fare better when a healthy balance between personal and professional life is reflected in their weekly schedule. A minister who has unusual family demands—for example, a chronically ill or disabled family member, an aging parent, or several younger children—would not be a preferred candidate for an afterpastor ministry (Gaede, XXII).

Dealing with a congregation's grief and loss- One of the most important aspects of an afterpastor's beginning ministry to a wounded congregation is to assist them to understand and experience the grief process caused by the earthquake event. There will

always be some people who are ready to rush toward a quick resolution of the trauma, believing that the past should be buried and forgotten. However, until there is an adequate opportunity for the congregation to work through their feelings of grief and loss, it is not possible to build upon a healthy foundation for the future.

Patricia Liberty lists the classic stages of the grief process and applies them to wounded congregations in practical terms:

- *Denial*- “The power of denial cannot be underestimated in the early stages of congregational recovery.... The remedy for denial is accurate information given repeatedly over time and combined with an empathetic and caring acknowledgment of the difficulty the information creates in the hearer.... There is no value in being confrontational with people in their denial, and it may be psychologically damaging. Denial serves as an emotional firewall, providing protection from information that is too painful and difficult to absorb all at once” (Gaede, 41).
- *Anger*- “As the avenues of denial fade, there is often a strong anger response. It is frequently focused on the victim or complainant who may or may not be known to the congregation.... Rarely is the anger focused on the offending pastor early in the process, because it is too painful for congregants to believe that their beloved pastor is capable of such behavior.... Anger at everyone other than the pastor is a protective mechanism that shields people from the pain of their betrayal by a trusted religious leader” (Gaede, 42).
- *Bargaining*- “Bargaining is a short-lived but important part of a congregation’s process. Congregations will often propose that their pastor go through whatever denominational process is demanded (counseling, professional growth, supervision, and so forth) and that they hold the position open so he or she can return later” (Gaede, 43).
- *Depression*- “Depression is an important and often lengthy part of congregational recovery, and it may be among the most confusing and distressing. Depression often comes many months into the process and catches congregations by surprise, because they think that they should be ‘feeling better’ and ‘getting on with it’ by then. To feel themselves gradually slipping into a deep sense of malaise so many months into their process is discouraging; however, this is often the turning point in recovery. It is here that congregations have the capacity to feel at a deeper and nonreactive level that allows them to see the impact of the misconduct, how their own history as a congregation may have contributed, as well as implications and possibilities for the future. This can be a rich time of recovery and insight. Because depression is so

painful, however, there is a tendency to deny it, hurry it through, or move around it without mining its riches” (Gaede, 43).

- *Acceptance*- “Acceptance is a nebulous thing. At some level, individuals who have suffered the loss of a loved one are forever changed by their experience. Those who are faithful to their grief work, however, are strong witnesses to the truth that healing is possible. Each person resolves grief in his or her own way and goes on to live out of that understanding.... Agreement about what happened is *not* the indicator of acceptance. Agreement that the congregation has suffered and a renewed commitment to mission and ministry are more accurate indicators of acceptance and a readiness to move on” (Gaede, 44-45).

Behavioral signs of recovery- How do we know when a congregation has “turned the corner” and is ready to work toward building a positive future? Larriane Frampton states that the behavioral signs of recovery are a helpful way to assess the congregation’s recovery progress. As members work through their grief, loss, anger, and depression, how they relate to one another and how they engage in the church’s future are helpful indicators. Here are two questions that she believes can help determine the church’s progress in the healing process:

The first: *Is the church reenergized for mission and ministry?* Every church has a mission, and it is not to self-destruct over the misconduct of a religious leader. When a church begins to reinvest its energy in the mission it defines as its reason for being, it is well along in the healing process.... An honesty born of much pain and struggle adds a measure of authenticity to the witness of the church and the integrity of its ministry. Like individuals who work through personal crisis and tragedy and come to a renewed, wiser, and deeper faith, churches that attend to their healing work embody a similar spirituality that grounds them in mission and ministry.

A second question should be asked: *Is it safe for survivors to return to the church?* Whether or not the survivor actually returns to the church is not the point. The question is asked as a way of gauging how well the church understands what has happened. If members are still blaming the survivor, they have more healing work to do. If it is safe for the survivor to return and be welcomed into the life and ministry of the church, then the church “gets it” and has shifted its paradigm from blaming the victim to holding the offending clergy person accountable. The ability to answer yes to that simple question reflects a long, difficult journey through grief, sadness, and anger as well as

theological reflection and organizational review. When churches are faithful to their healing journey, everyone benefits (Gaede, 137).

I do think that these two questions are excellent guidelines to help assess a congregation's progress toward healing. However, in my present ministry assignment, we did not have anyone who was a victim of pastoral abuse return to the church, though I had initiated contact to express a pastoral concern for those who had suffered and left our congregation before I arrived.

Avoiding pitfalls in recovery ministry- At times in the recovery process there is a temptation to want to move the process along much faster than is healthy for the pastor or the congregation. Here are some guidelines for pitfalls that should be avoided while ministering to a wounded congregation:

- *Attempting to bypass recovery through evangelism, church growth, or outreach efforts.* Most pastors cannot bring about congregational growth without the help and support of the members.... The cost of premature growth is often forced termination or a congregational split.
- *Attempting redevelopment too early.* A common mistake is to begin redevelopment within a year or two of the disclosure. For at least five years, the goals should be reestablishing appropriate professional boundaries, developing spiritually mature lay leaders, and establishing open patterns of communication. Attempting redevelopment before these things are accomplished is usually ineffective.
- *Underestimating the potential for stress and burnout.* The potential for health problems, divorce, or an episode of sexual misconduct is significantly higher for afterpastors than for pastors in other settings. It is best to negotiate and make arrangements with the judicatory for professional coaching or counseling prior to accepting a call or appointment as an afterpastor.
- *Participating in a clergy support group where no one has experience being an afterpastor.* Congregations where clergy misconduct has occurred are unique settings. Sound pastoral practices that are effective elsewhere are often benign at best. Pastors with no experience in these settings often have trouble even believing some of the things that are routine for afterpastors.
- *Going into a congregation without a back-up plan.* An afterpastor needs to negotiate a back-up plan with the judicatory before accepting a call or appointment as an afterpastor (Gaede, 177-178).

The length of the recovery ministry process- Many times while in the trying moments of the recovery process, I wondered how long it would take for the church to turn the corner toward a positive future. Having a better sense of a time frame for recovery process would have helped me to understand that the best way to approach this kind of ministry is with the long view in mind.

Here is an insight about the length of the recovery process in congregations that have suffered from clergy moral failure:

The damage done by clergy misconduct to the office of ministry within an organization or congregation is pervasive and persistent. Healing after misconduct may take as much as a decade if not a generation to accomplish. Some congregations in the aftermath of misconduct may be galvanized by the experience and, after intentional efforts to heal, will be more vital, appearing transformed by the experience. Most congregations, however, will never again be quite themselves. A few will never be healed and will always evidence the damage of misconduct in their relationship with ministers. Certainly all congregations where misconduct has occurred are forever changed. Afterpastors who hope to foster healing in congregations must take a long view. Their immediate job is to focus on restoring trust in pastoral relationships and to the office of ministry amid challenging and difficult conditions. When they do so, they will bring about a unique and essential step in healing congregations and organizations affected by clergy misconduct and thus create the possibility that in the long run, full healing will occur (Gaede, 63).

How does one know when the recovery process is completed and that it is time to move on from one's ministry assignment? That question is difficult to answer due to the lack of clear models for recovery ministry and a lack of clarity in what a healed congregation looks like. Matthew Linden presents this answer to when it is appropriate to bring to a close a recovery ministry to a wounded congregation:

At some point in the slow recovery process, an afterpastor asks, Will things get better? I think a more productive question is, to quote Jack Nicholson, "What if this is as good as it gets?" The difference in phrasing shifts the focus from conditions within the congregational system to the pastor's own functioning

within that system. The average tenure for an afterpastor is around three years in a recovery process that often takes ten years or more. Afterpastors need to accept that they may not complete the entire process with the congregation and would be wise to define faithful ministry as helping the congregation move from one stage of recovery to the next. Staying in that setting too long can be harmful for both the afterpastor and the congregation (Gaede, 178).

When I first began my ministry in wounded congregations, I assumed that the recovery time period would have been much shorter than what actually happened. Had I known recent research determined that the average length of the recovery process lasted up to a period of about ten years, I might have decided not to take on such a demanding ministry assignment. Although my second recovery ministry assignment was more intensive and painful than the first church, I do believe that having previous knowledge and experience with recovery ministry issues helped to shorten the time frame of the recovery period from what is accepted as the average.

2. *Restoring the Soul of a Church*- Nancy Hopkins and Mark Laaser, Editors

This book is also a compilation of several articles that cover different aspects of healing that must occur in congregations wounded by clergy sexual misconduct. In contrast to the previous work cited, this one focuses more on the personal and interpersonal dimensions of recovery ministry—the primary victims and offenders, the secondary victims (congregations, afterpastors, and the wider community), and implications for long term healing in the recovery process.

Its impact upon wounded congregations- Nils Friberg provides helpful insights into the reason why clergy misconduct causes such severe damage within a congregation. This trauma is closely linked to the meaning of ministry and the spirituality that is practiced by the members. The pastor's role and identity are not only closely tied with the church's mission, but often the congregation's faith experience, thus causing a

tremendous shaking to their once positive image and relationship with the pastor as their shepherd, model, and teacher.

Clergy are often associated with God's own person and will, since their preaching, liturgical leadership, and pastoral care is powerfully representational of the divine. The clerical role and persona has been tightly associated week by week with our holiest moments. To accept the possibility that this person is one who is capable of serious violation of sexual boundaries creates for us emotional and theological dissonance of the highest order (Hopkins, 57).

Besides the emotional impact that takes place within the church family, there is another residual impact that shakes the congregation's foundation. Often the remaining leaders are faced with a variety of personal emotions and diverse reactions from the rest of the congregation.

One of the first places people focus is with the question, Who's responsible for this person being in this powerful place of influence? If the polity is congregationally centered with an elected board of elders, for example, these elders usually bear the brunt of the people's wrath. Those who have served on the search committees that invited the perpetrator to serve in this church come under scrutiny. In the minds of those who identify with the clergy person's cause will attack the leadership for bringing the case out in the open. Division of loyalties occurs around these and many other issues as people begin to take sides in the melee.... People want things righted again, justice executed, and the pain taken away. As a result, local leaders report becoming exhausted, harried, anxious, depressed, and irritable, depending upon their personalities and defense styles. The rumor-gossip cycle seems to go on and on (Hopkins, 60).

At the same time that the leadership team attempts to provide damage control and stability to these traumatic circumstances, there are internal conflicts and struggles that are often faced in the private moments when they have time to ponder the meaning of this earthquake experience.

Self-doubt is one very real element for leadership people in this situation. I was duped. How can I trust my judgment now? Are my instincts good, or not to be followed? How could I be so blind, so deaf, so unaware? Can I lead again? Has God really called me to lead? How can I be so sure? This issue takes time and spiritual renewal to be healed (Hopkins, 72).

Its impact upon afterpastors- When a recovery leader enters a wounded congregation, these turbulent forces have already at work. The recovery leader must be ready to withstand the aftershocks that occur while establishing a stabilizing presence among the traumatized leaders and church members. The afterpastor is often the target of the anger and frustration that members are unwilling to admit exists under the surface.

Darlene Haskin underscores the importance of the recovery leader monitoring his own well being while ministering to the wounded congregation.

The afterpastor has a critical role to play in helping the congregation heal. A congregation that has been traumatized requires a sense of safety and stability. The afterpastor's ability to provide what the congregation needs is dependent on his or her personal well-being. If the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the afterpastor are not attended to, the church will not be helped or served. Openness, self-knowledge, and self-awareness are key to carrying out a healing ministry while remaining healthy.... The afterpastor need not be harmed by this challenging ministry. It can, in fact, lead him or her to growth that otherwise might not take place (Hopkins, 161).

Another critical area where the recovery leader must pay attention is how this ministry affects his own family members. The extra time demands and stressful ministry situations can have a detrimental influence upon the ministry family without adequate support systems in place. Haskin states that the difference between this being a positive or negative experience for the ministry family depends on how well connected the family is to a relational network of friends and professionals who will stand with them through the recovery ministry assignment:

Those afterpastors reporting positive family outcomes seemed to be surrounded by a strong support system that included one or more of the following: peers, mental-health professionals, and judicatory officials. Those reporting negative outcomes were more likely alone and on their own, feeling vulnerable and insecure. It is isolation that is most responsible for undermining the family and demoralizing the afterpastor (Hopkins, 160).

Recommendations for recovery ministry professionals- Darlene Haskin

concludes her article “Afterpastors in Troubled Congregations” with these helpful

recommendations for anyone who is involved with establishing a recovery ministry plan:

First, it has become clear to me that congregations or denominations charged with selecting an individual to serve as an afterpastor must be very thoughtful in their choice. The afterpastor of a wounded congregation faces extraordinary difficulties. The traits that a selection committee should look for include extensive practical experience in conflict resolution and the theoretical knowledge to interpret that experience, tremendous personal maturity and stability, a very clear sense of personal limitations, and a good sense of professional boundaries.

Second, an afterpastor probably won't be able to serve a congregation for more than five years. Two factors lead to this conclusion. The position is so stressful that it is difficult to remain in it for any great length of time. Also, the afterpastor is often blamed for the difficulties the congregation suffers as a result of the betrayal of trust. This scapegoating can make it nearly impossible to remain as the congregation's leader for any length of time.

Third, the afterpastor cannot do this job alone. He or she will require a great deal of support from denominational officials. The support is not likely to come from the congregation because the members are struggling to deal with the betrayal of trust. It is critical that sufficient mechanisms for support and reflection be made available to the afterpastor.

Fourth, the role of the afterpastor is to provide the congregation with a sense of safety by providing high-quality pastoral and administrative ministry. The congregation also requires professional help such as grief therapy, anger workshops, and education on the nature of sexual misconduct and the uses of power.... The afterpastor cannot be expected to be the healer of the congregation and also its pastor. These are two separate roles and too much for any one person to handle.

Finally, the denomination and the congregation need to have a clear sense of what they expect of the afterpastor. This will require that some outside facilitator help both of these bodies identify the issues the wounded congregation is facing and the role the afterpastor can play in helping to restore the health of the congregation. The ultimate responsibility for intervening in the congregation's sickness belongs to the larger Church (Haskin, 163-164).

It is apparent from these descriptions that aspiration and inspiration alone will not suffice when taking on this kind of ministry assignment. Also, recovery ministry cannot

be approached as a solitary ministry role. Careful investigation and planning are necessary to organize an effective support team for both the congregation and for the afterpastor and his family before stepping into the earthquake zone of the wounded congregation.

3. Congregational Trauma: Caring, Coping, & Learning- Jill Hudson

Jill Hudson's book is a helpful guide for understanding the psychological, theological, and practical dimensions of trauma covering a variety of situations, such as suicide, murder, accidents, or terrorist acts of violence. The nature of the crisis will affect the congregational members in different ways, so the pastoral leader must be sensitive to the personal and spiritual needs of the whole group.

Hudson defines trauma in this way: "Trauma is the result of an unanticipated and sudden event and always involves significant personal loss which leaves the individual feeling devastated and out of control" (Hudson, 16). Working with the entire congregation requires a different approach to grief recovery from the trauma and loss that has been experienced. Since congregations have patterns and personalities just as families do, it is important to understand how the congregation best processes their grief and provide the necessary pastoral care to assist the healing process. The healing process involves facing the reality of loss and letting go. It also means accepting an altered perspective of the future that is different than before the trauma occurred.

Hudson provides practical strategies for caring and coping when disaster or tragedy impacts a family or the whole congregation. The pastoral role fulfills a significant role in the recovery process by allowing people to talk about their loss, and to point them to their hope in God as the source of their comfort and strength for the future. The

appendices also offer guidelines for grief counseling for youth and children affected by death.

4. *Accountable Leadership*- Paul Chaffee

One of the important practical aspects that must be implemented in the early stages of recovery ministry is establishing stability and order to the congregation that has gone through an earthquake experience. Paul Chaffee's book provides an excellent resource guide that covers a broad range of issues relating to the ethical, legal, and financial areas of recovery ministry.

With the potential threat of litigation in today's world, it is imperative to know what the law requires when there has been sexual or ethical misconduct in the congregation. Chaffee guides the reader through the legal issues and the details to be covered by the leadership team to protect both the leadership board and the congregation from liability.

Often the administrative infrastructure takes a major blow when there is misconduct. It is therefore necessary to develop a sound financial management system to maintain accountability when everything is in disarray. Another chapter covers employment practices that safeguard the congregation through proper screening of applicants and volunteers and establishing personnel policies for proper employee discipline and dismissal.

A final section provides guidelines for establishing legal and accountability policies to prevent abusive behavior within the congregation. After a congregation has been wounded by clergy misconduct, it is essential to put these ethical boundaries in

place so that the congregation can move toward healing, knowing that a safe environment is possible due to the careful oversight of the recovery pastor and church board.

B. Congregational Recovery and Renewal

When a recovery leader steps into the earthquake zone of a wounded congregation, it is important to understand the spiritual and relational dynamics that are at work under the surface. There are many helpful books available today on conflict management in the local church. One resource I have found recently that covers an overview of ministry issues related to recovery ministry is *return: Restoring Churches to the Heart of God* by David Miles. This guidebook provides practical help for an intentional interim pastor from establishing a contract and job description with the congregation, to diagnosing the problems, processing grief and loss, resolving conflicts, and developing leadership and healthy communication within the congregation. Each aspect of restoration ministry for the interim pastor or interventionist is broken down into concise chapters that cover the basics of that ministry task or function.

Antagonists in the Church by Kenneth Haugk and *Clergy Killers* by Lloyd Rediger are two useful resources for facing the challenges of conflict management in the congregation. *Overcoming Resistance to Change* by Charles Ridley and Steven Goodwin explains the basic steps necessary to understand what processes are at work against change and how to use them to bring about change in the church.

However, the following resources that I have chosen to review were the most helpful for me in my recovery ministry experience. They provide vital information to understand the nature of spiritual and relational conflicts at work within a wounded or

troubled congregation, and they provide some important guidelines in how to resolve them.

1. *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflicts* by Ron Susek

Ron Susek believes that essential ministry skills for church leaders today should include how to detect relational problems that lead to church conflict and how to respond with quick action to rescue a church before experiencing the destructive impact caused by church splits.

Part one of his book is a practical manual that guides church leaders through the six phases of church conflict and provides recommendations for extinguishing the firestorm on that level before it reaches its full fury. Here is an overview of each stage in the life cycle of a firestorm:

Phase 1: Sparks- Differences of preference or opinion can lead to disagreements. These disagreements usually focus on issues, and are not personal in nature. In this phase people are not attacking or defensive. The solution for this phase is to bring about resolution through mutual agreements on the issue at hand. Susek writes,

We must be very clear at this point that these differences are not sinful or evil but God-given. These legitimate differences must be respected and honored, as well as blended (which is basic in spiritual growth), otherwise they will produce a long series of sparks that can ignite a firestorm (Susek, 26).

Phase 2: Sparks igniting a firestorm- At this stage, people feel uneasy with each other. Personal offenses may have been taken from the disagreement, and sides may begin to form as this conflict builds in intensity. At this point, it is necessary to bring intervention and church discipline, if necessary, to prevent the conflict from spreading.

Do not take a wait-and-see posture, or you will lose. These dynamics do not die down or go away on their own. Weakened leadership says, “We’ll wait out the storm and see what happens.” That merely fuels the problem (Susek, 38).

Phase 3: Firestorm in full fury- “When a firestorm ignites, there is an almost overnight collapse of reason, negotiation, tolerance, love, and forgiveness. Factions take on a ‘We are right, and they are the enemy’ mindset” (Susek, 44). At this stage, the leadership cannot be indecisive about issues. Involve a crisis management consultant to provide outside intervention to slow the intensity and spread of the firestorm’s fury.

Phase 4: Consuming winds- In this destructive phase the fallout is a decline in attendance and revenue, the collapse of congregational moral, and the loss of vision for ministry in the church and community. “The greatest casualty of the firestorm was the gospel of Jesus Christ, as the church focused on survival rather than salvation” (Susek, 50). Susek explains the destructive impact of the firestorm in these terms:

Each side is sure that the other side will not change, so fighting is seen as the only option. Permanent damage is done. People who cannot stomach the fight begin to leave. Some people leave as a statement of protest. Others feel pressured to leave by family and friends (Susek, 51).

The recommended strategy for this phase is to work closely with an experienced consultant who understands how to handle this level of conflict, and to call the congregation to days of fasting and prayer to seek God’s help.

Phase 5: The final burn- “The object now between groups is to discredit and destroy the opposition. Winning is no longer enough for the groups; destroying the enemy is the passion. Serious violence can break out. Dangerous threats (lawsuits and bodily harm) may be made” (Susek, 58).

Hiring a neutral consultant to start a fact-finding procedure and to assure fairness to all parties may help to dissipate the emotional energy of the warring groups. It is

necessary to turn the people's attention away from destroying the perceived enemy and back on problem-solving to arrive at a resolution.

Phase 6: Rebuilding on burnt timbers- How does a congregation that has been through a firestorm start over on the road to recovery? Susek states that the answer is found in how the congregation's past and present is framed. "The question to be asked is not, 'Did our side win?' but 'How can we best glorify God in all that we do now?'" (Susek, 62) At this point the congregation has to stop trying to understand the past and start acting like the church that God meant for it to be. Susek gives this counsel for churches who have survived the firestorm and are rebuilding for the future:

If the pastor resigns, it is vital to hire an interim pastor, or the cycle can start all over again. An interim serves best at this point to prepare the way so the new pastor can have a clean start. Otherwise, the new pastor may have a short-lived, lame-duck ministry resulting in leftover embers and smoke casting the odor of conflict upon him. A growing number of pastors specialize in this kind of interim ministry.

Invite a special speaker to assist you in a series of meetings geared to healing of the remnant. Themes such as unconditional love, forgiveness, and unity are necessary (Susek, 66).

Fighting the firestorm- The role and actions of the church's leadership is a critical factor in extinguishing the firestorm's fury. Susek lists four hindrances to decisive action when facing a firestorm.

The first hindrance is *the failure to distinguish the difference between a peacekeeper and a peacemaker*.

Peacekeepers tend to be passive, preferring to avoid conflict. That won't solve problems. Avoidance generally turns to anarchy, not peaceful resolution. Generally peacemakers are not effective leaders amid conflict.

On the other hand, peacemakers tackle conflict head-on, determined to bring peace based on truth, mutual understanding, and forgiveness. Though this is generally painful, if it's done with the proper mixture of justice, mercy, and grace, it's the only hope for making peace (Susek, 126).

The second hindrance is *indecision*. A “wait and see” approach, hoping not to make a mistake will not resolve the conflict. Susek explains that “leadership must rely upon bold, clear thinking when time is not a friend” (Susek, 126).

The third hindrance is *board division*. “Boards may divide for various reasons: conflicting perceptions of the problem, insufficient information, loyalties to people who are to be disciplined, pressure from factions in the church, or family complications with people to be disciplined” (Susek, 127).

The last hindrance to acting decisively is *ambivalence about the difference between judgment and judgmentalism*. Susek explains the difference between the two in this way: “What stalls the board is the lack of understanding about exercising judgment to *evaluate* and being judgmental with the intent to *condemn*” (Susek, 127).

Each of these hurdles must be overcome or the church board will be paralyzed to take the necessary action to intervene and inhibit the spread of the conflict in the congregation. In my own ministry experience, failure to give immediate attention to each of these four hindrances led to a delay or a setback in our recovery process. I learned the hard way that by not confronting divisive issues and divisive people as soon as possible, the conflict was allowed to simmer and spread to others in the congregation. The recovery leader must at times take a strong stand on the truth even when it will be uncomfortable or unpopular with others—because the goal of conflict resolution is to remove of the source of the conflict, and not just to lessen the relational tensions among divided leadership board or congregation.

Care for badly burned churches- In chapter 22, Susek provides some helpful advice for recovering from the collateral damage that the firestorm caused in the

wounded congregation. These insights are particularly helpful for church leadership to understand the reactive attitudes and behaviors that often result from going through significant trauma.

Your firestorm produced that critical mass and left your church in emotional and spiritual shambles. Now that it has passed, new critical mass attitudes are forming. They must be understood and addressed, or a new firestorm could break out, leveling what remains.

Most people will not understand what is troubling them. The leadership must help them define and resolve the inner responses to the calamity that shook their church. There is a subconscious search for a leader—one to guide the church out of the nightmare. This leader must help people deal with their collective confusion, fear, insecurity, disappointment, anger, guilt, discouragement, despair, and paralysis (Susek, 218).

Here is a brief summary of these maladies that may develop in the wounded congregation along with positive actions to prevent the congregation from sinking deeper into the rubble of the firestorm's devastation.

Collective confusion- “The congregation will be overrun with opinions about the cause of the firestorm. Each person will have a fragment of the truth, but few will possess the whole story.... It is critical to put a stop to speculation, since this only prolongs and deepens the problem and offers nothing for resolution” (Susek, 219).

Collective Fear- “Unanswered questions create fear that will make the congregation overly cautious, even resistant to recovery efforts. The church leader must not ignore the reality of these concerns. It will take one to two years of steady success for the fear to subside. Boldly address the questions and fears head-on with sound biblical explanations” (Susek, 219).

Collective Insecurity- The congregation may also show signs of questioning the leadership, even after the leaders have spent long, hard hours working to resolve the church's problems. The leadership board must maintain an open door policy for people to

express their fears and concerns. This will help eliminate the spread of rumors and panic among the members.

Collective Disappointment- People will be overwhelmed with disappointment if the pastor has behaved in a way that betrays the truth he preached, if other leaders are responsible for causing the firestorm, or when issues become more important than people. “Whatever the cause of disappointment, it is a real emotion that must be addressed and resolved. Otherwise, disillusionment can result, and this can cause people to fall from the faith” (Susek, 221).

Collective Anger- People may become angry for a variety of reasons. However, they must not be made to feel guilty for being angry, for anger is a valid emotion. However, it is important for the leadership to show people how to handle and resolve their anger constructively so that they don’t sin in it. (Eph. 4:26) Susek points out that not all anger will result in outbursts or disputes. “Anger can also take on a more subtle form. People may continue to attend but won’t get involved in church programs. Because they feel powerless to conquer the problem, they withdraw as a form of passive protest” (Susek, 221).

Collective Guilt- A common question that church members may wonder after a firestorm: Is God punishing us with this trouble? They may feel unworthy of love and respect, so it is necessary to demonstrate and preach on God’s love and assurance over a long period of time to dispense this sense of guilt.

Collective Discouragement- The fallout from a firestorm can severely impair the ongoing ministries of the church, leading to discouragement in those who remain:

When the church is so damaged that special programs for your elderly, young married couples, and children are reduced or obliterated, discouragement cripples

the remnant. There is no easy solution, because people who love the church and want to stay also may feel the need to go where their specialized needs can be met.

Strong sermons must be preached on the greatness of God to deliver the church from the impossible. Faith must be awakened and positively challenged to engage in seeking God for his mighty works. Then practical steps must be put into place to focus the people's hope on a fresh vision. The congregation will extend a period of grace to the leadership as long as it sees a plan of action being put into place (Susek, 222).

Collective Despair- Discouragement is the doorway to despair. And despair is understandable. People who are plagued with personal problems must now deal with a church crippled by emotional conflict and potential financial collapse.

How can people in despair recover? People can endure any crisis providing they have a big enough reason. Such a reason must be set forth—one that can inspire special faith and sacrifice. The congregation must be taught that historically God allows the worst of calamities to come on his finest people. To believe and obey God through the crisis can produce great spiritual growth. Never set forth a lesser reason than the glory of God and the purpose of God for dispelling despair (Susek, 223).

Collective Paralysis- The final outcome in this downward spiral is indecisiveness and an unwillingness to take risks that would move them toward recovery. Susek concludes, "People lean toward making no decision rather than risking action that could bring a new disturbance. Herein, the church will lose the vitality needed to rise from the ashes" (Susek, 223).

These vivid descriptions are part of the reality that existed in the congregations where I had come to minister as a recovery leader. There are two important leadership tasks that are essential for helping a congregation to make the turnaround necessary for recovery. First, there must be a confident emphasis placed on looking to God as the One whom can rescue them out of their pain, fear, and discouragement. The second task is to carefully explain each of these conditions as part of the fallout from going through their

traumatic experience. When they understand that feeling these ways are normal for a wounded congregation, it is easier to accept the dissonance that they feel from the aftershocks occurring in the congregation. I have found this book to be an invaluable resource for understanding and applying practical action steps at whatever stage the wounded congregation is in the firestorm process.

2. Healing the Heart of Your Church- Kenneth Quick

The corporate heart of the church- Kenneth Quick's book provides a different leadership paradigm for understanding chronic patterns of congregational dysfunction and how to break out of these dysfunctional patterns. Quick believes that the corporate heart of the church must be addressed before change can happen in a wounded or troubled congregation. He cites the premise of his book in the introduction: "The Lord of the Church does not let much else happen corporately—dynamic spiritual growth, God's kind love demonstrated in relationships, revival or renewal, to name a few—until these wrongs are righted and the wounds receive attention" (Quick, 12). Therefore, one of the tasks of a recovery leader is to assess and address the spiritual roadblocks that have hindered the corporate health and growth of the church.

Our contemporary emphasis on the individualistic thinking causes us to overlook the New Testament's emphasis on the corporate responsibility for the health and well being of the church. "The apostle Paul addressed nine of his thirteen letters to churches with corporate problems. Only occasionally does he mention specific problem people. Most problems are presented as a corporate concern" (Quick, 21). Likewise, in the book of Revelation, Jesus views the collective attitudes and actions of these seven local churches as a singular whole. He addresses each letter to the churches by evaluating their

corporate histories and presenting a corporate responsibility to repent or to obey his directives.

Therefore, the church leaders must learn the corporate history of the congregation to determine what has caused the systemic dysfunction in the church and then lead the congregation to acknowledge its corporate responsibility (regardless if the original members that initiated the problem are still there or not) and to follow a corporate response to correct the problem.

Mediatorial authority- Chapter three provided some helpful insights for church leaders using *mediatorial authority* to address the corporate dysfunctions of the congregation. Quick explains that most contemporary leadership approaches fail to address the issue of spiritual authority in the church:

How authority works when exercised over a flock of God's children, particularly spiritual authority, is one of the least understood dynamics in the modern church. This lack of understanding has led to a growing trust in the world's definitions and patterns of leadership. Church leaders have looked to business and the military for their principles of leadership. They read Drucker, Bennis, and Sun Tsu for insights on how to lead and manage their church, staff, and people. These teachers do provoke our thinking and have their place, but they are in the category of modern psychology. Psychology is helpful when it observes and describes accurately the way humans relate, but unhealthy and dangerous when it theorizes why humans relate that way. Spiritual leadership is qualitatively different than any business or military model of leadership (Quick, 35).

Quick's view of mediatorial authority is based on a corporate leadership perspective of Peter's instruction in 1 Peter 5:2-3.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Quick believes that most leaders tend to think that this passage's instruction focuses on the individual care of members in the congregation. Though this shepherding

function cannot be neglected, there is a more important one that is often overlooked.

What is often missing is their leadership responsibility as shepherds of the whole flock as a mediatorial function. This means that “those in spiritual leadership can represent the corporate body and speak for them before God and men, even as a husband can as head of his family” (Quick, 38).

The common exercise of leadership authority is represented by taking on titles that elevate leaders above the flock rather than as representative leaders who govern on behalf of the body. This leadership approach that should be followed by church boards was also modeled by Jesus:

It is as the “Man Christ Jesus” that Jesus operates as the Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). *His oneness with us is the basis for His mediatorial authority over us.* The reason for this is simple: If He were not one with us, He could not stand for us. It is the oneness the pastor and spiritual leaders have with the congregation that is the basis for their mediatorial authority. As soon as they adopt an “us-them” attitude, they cease to be effective in mediatorial ministry (Quick, 38).

How this kind of leadership authority should be exercised is explained in the following paragraph:

When the leadership discovers the things Jesus has been communicating to the church, they are in the role and position to do something about it. They can act on behalf of the congregation and deal with corporate issues and address historical problems. These may entail wounds created by former pastors, boards, splits, power plays, doctrinal problems, unresolved corporate conflicts or moral issues. The problems may go back generations. All of them directly impact the heart of the church. All of them are the kinds of things Jesus addresses in Revelation 2 and 3 (Quick, 38).

Exercising mediatorial authority- The exercise of spiritual authority is this mediatorial function can only be done by the pastor and leadership board of the church working together as the leadership team, and in cooperation with the congregation as their representative leaders. When properly exercised, the congregation’s unhealthy and

destructive patterns can be properly addressed and the corporate heart of the church can be healed.

One of the important tasks of the church leaders is to get to the root of the church's problems and struggles. This will involve doing the investigative work of reviewing the congregation's spiritual history. Rather than focusing on the superficial problems that plague the church, the leadership must locate the source behind the recurring patterns that have developed in the congregation. This requires an honest look at the history of the church. Quick provides helpful guidelines such as drawing a time-line map of the church's journey, and chart the rise and fall of attendance over the decades on that time-line (See Quick, 60, 61). Interviewing former pastors and church leaders from past periods may uncover insights that help fill in the details of the patterns that develop from this investigative search.

The next step in this process for the leadership to discern what would be Jesus' corporate message to their church. This can be accomplished by writing the letter that they believe Jesus would write to their church following his pattern modeled in his letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. This is a powerful way to transition from reflection to action. Quick lists these guidelines for composing this letter:

The Letter of Jesus to the Eighth Local Church—Ours!

Jesus wrote the seven letters of Revelation 2 and 3 to seven local churches with a variety of issues on his heart. He still speaks to local churches and has messages for them based on His Word. Assess what Jesus might be saying to your church. Write a letter in the format of the letter to the seven churches that you think Jesus might send to your local church.

Salutation: Some characterization of Jesus, attributes which might be apropos to your church.

Clear Commendation: Jesus usually finds things to commend in the church. What would they be in your church?

Constructive Criticism: Jesus puts His finger on some key issues at present and historically in the church. What would He point out as needing to be addressed in your local church?

Crucial Counsel: There is something your church needs to do to get right with Him again.

Promise to the Congregation: Those who do what Jesus says in the advice portion will “overcome” the obstacles to their growth and are promised some amazing things. What would He promise your people if they are courageous to do what He says (Quick, 74)?

The second half of Quick’s book covers various kinds of congregational wounds and illnesses needing leadership oversight to move the church through the healing process: healing from splits, from pastors that abuse, for churches that abuse pastors, from sinful reactivity, and from past shame. Having been through a painful experience in while pastoring a wounded church, Kenneth Quick has listed some practical guidelines in this book that church leaders can use to help heal the corporate heart of their congregation.

3. *Setting Your Church Free* by Neil Anderson & Charles Mylander

Neil Anderson and Charles Mylander have written a helpful manual to assist church leaders resolve the spiritual and relational conflicts that prevent their congregation from being healthy and making progress fulfilling their mission. Jesus’ desire for his church is revealed in his prayer for unity in John 17. The visible unity of his followers would be the basis upon which the gospel ministry would be validated and spread. However, many churches struggle with perpetual relational problems and dysfunctional leadership and ministry structures that undermine the advancement of the gospel in their community.

Bringing leadership into alignment- In the first half of the book, Neil Anderson lays the foundation for a healthy church. He believes that the church leadership must first

be in proper alignment and have experienced freedom in Christ from personal and spiritual conflicts that hinder personal growth. Until the church leadership has worked through this process, they will be unable to lead the congregation through freedom in Christ from the spiritual bondage that may hold back the church.

Anderson underscores the importance of balanced and shared leadership in the local congregation. He believes that a plurality of elders, providing spiritual oversight of the congregation with Christ recognized as the Head, is the best way to maintain the proper balance of leadership authority in the church. His functional definition of leadership contains these elements: “Leadership is the ability to gain consensus and commitment to common objectives, beyond organizational requirements, which are attained with the experience of contribution and satisfaction of the whole church” (Anderson, 90). As the governing board gains the cooperation and commitment of the congregation to be centered on Christ, the church will grow in maturity and passion to fulfill their mission for Christ.

What a group holds in common is the strongest link in the organizational chain by which objectives are determined. If we are bonded to Christ and He alone is who we have in common, we can collectively and easily come up with meaningful objectives.

In this setting, the center of the bell-shaped curve is Christ. In spiritually dead churches, the common bond can be similar occupations (we are all blue or white collar), social interests (we are all hunters or golfers), or politics (we are all conservative or liberal). The common norm of a church becomes more and more influenced by culture as it drifts further and further from Christ, the Hub. Healthy churches do not primarily establish programs around social norms because, in most churches, very few people hold everything in common socially (Anderson, 91).

Bringing the congregation into alignment- Once the leadership board is in proper alignment, they can plan to lead the congregation through the *Setting Your Church Free* format. The second half of the book, written mostly by Charles Mylander, explains

the seven step process for dealing with the corporate sins and dysfunctions in the church through this congregational event. During the Setting Your Church Free event, every person needs to be sensitive to God's leading. There should be an expectation of 100% participation of those involved in the church's leadership. Mylander recommends that, if possible, the person leading the event should be an outside facilitator:

We recommend that an unbiased, outside facilitator lead your church leadership through these steps. It might be a retired pastor, a denominational official, or a capable leader from a nearby church. The senior pastor should be part of the process, not the facilitator. Qualifications for the facilitator include the biblical requirements for elders and deacons (see 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9) (Anderson, 181).

They also recommend that this event be held on a Friday evening and all day Saturday format, or a Sunday afternoon and evening, with a minimum of seven hours set aside for the event (See Anderson, 182).

Steps 1 and 2: Evaluate the Church's Strengths and Weaknesses

When churches struggle or are stagnant, the tendency is to try to do something to correct the observable symptoms—poor attendance, financial problems, ineffective leadership, or dysfunctional patterns of interpersonal conflict. However, when Jesus' evaluated the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, he focused on issues of disobedience and faithfulness. The place to begin is to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the church.

To encourage feedback good questions here would include: "What are the things that we always do best? What works here every time? How has God uniquely gifted us as a church" (Anderson, 188)?

On the other side, questions that may help facilitate responses about the weaknesses in the church are: What are our faults, shortcomings, and failures? What

should we be doing that is not being done? This is not a time to express blame or judgment upon any individual. The focal point is the congregation as a whole.

Step 3: Dealing with the Power of Memories

Memories can be a powerful force for good or for evil. They can bring joy and encouragement or move us to regret and resentment.

Every church has memories. These memories aren't neutral. They hold hidden power. They shape a church's sense of worth. They help build or destroy morale. They become foundations for more faith or reasons for more fear. They color how the leaders see the pastor, view church conflicts or approach fresh goals. These past events affect the present and the future of the church (Anderson, 195).

The purpose of this part of the event is to understand the meaning behind the good memories and the bad memories. The congregation is encouraged to share the good memories and thank God for those blessings. When sharing the bad memories, it becomes an opportunity to release the offenses that were done and extend forgiveness toward those who were part of the trauma.

During the time of silent forgiveness, prayerfully focus on each person until every remember pain surfaces. What is to be gained is freedom, not reconciliation. Principle people on the list may be dead. Some who are presently alive may not be willing to reconcile. Neither your freedom nor your church's can depend on what you have no right or ability to control... If, during this process, you recall that someone has something against you, then commit yourself to go and ask forgiveness at your earliest opportunity. If it is someone in the group, then take advantage of the next break to go to the person and ask their forgiveness. Not to do so would hinder the Lord's leading in your life and the freedom of your church (Anderson, 204).

Step 4: Dealing with Corporate Sins

It often is easy to find someone to blame for the problems that the church has endured. However, what is often overlooked is the corporate dimension of sin that can undermine a church's health and hinder God's blessing.

By corporate sins we mean patterns of behavior that are displeasing to our God and contrary to His revealed will. They do not differ from individual sins in

nature. Sin is still sin whether practiced by an individual or a group. What sets corporate sins apart from individual sins is their being held in common by the whole church or by a significant group within it. This pattern of sinfulness within the whole group life of the church calls for corporate action on the part of its leaders in order to deal with it (Anderson, 212).

Mylander encourages the group to ask the Lord to help them discern all sins of commission and omission by present and past leadership, as well as the church as a whole. These corporate sins must be publicly confessed, the group should ask the Lord to purify their church from these displeasing attitudes and actions. A sense of release should follow the confession as this process creates an environment where it is safe and acceptable to confess and renounce corporate sins that may have been overlooked or suppressed by the leadership or the church as a whole.

Step 5: Defeating Satan's Attacks

Unconfessed corporate sins in the church body provide an opening for the enemy to work in the congregation to attack, harass, deceive, and discourage the leaders and members. Therefore, the church leaders, as the representative overseers of the congregation, must take a stand against the enemy by declaring their resistance to his influence and their submission to Christ as their Head of the body.

Step 6: The Prayer Action Plan

In this step, the information gathered in the earlier steps is synthesized in three forms of declarations: "We renounce...", "We announce...", and "We affirm..." statements. "The goal in this crucial statement is to make the shortest list possible without leaving out any pattern of bondage within the church. This list, along with the greatest strengths of the church, becomes the Prayer Action Plan, and so it holds special

importance” (Anderson, 269). These statements will become the basis of the binding and loosing prayers for

Step 7: A Leadership Strategy

The final step in the Setting Your Church Free event is to pray for the leadership team to take what was learned and acted upon at this event and implement practical steps to prevent future incidents of corporate bondage from which the church has been set free. Though the event is over, the real work continues to keep the church focused on Christ as the center of its fellowship and mission.

C. Family Systems Theory in Recovery Ministry

One of the most helpful concepts that I learned in my discovery process was the value of family systems theory for understanding the relational and emotional dynamics at work under the surface in wounded congregations. At first, I couldn’t make sense in my ministry of bizarre attitudes and behaviors that were manifested by some people at certain times. Neither could I grasp how these dysfunctional behavior patterns could be passed on to other individuals after some of the original members departed. Recurring attitudes of distrust, fear, negativity, persisted even when the congregations seemed to have turned the corner. Because the new people who came into our congregations didn’t have knowledge of the “history” of the church, they had a much more positive view of the future. However, for some members the future could never look positive, and they finally would leave our church family.

A turning point came for me when I began reading Peter Scazzaro’s book, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*. He describes how important it is to look below the surface by asking the “Why” and “What’s going on” questions. We cannot break from the power

of the past until we understand how the past has shaped us, both in our family of origin and in the events that we have experienced. In his book he referred to another book that was extremely helpful in putting the family systems theory in perspective for me in a congregational setting—*Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life* by Ronald Richardson. There were a few other books on family systems that I have consulted, but I will limit my survey to the three that I found most helpful for my ministry.

1. *Creating a Healthier Church* by Ron Richardson

Understanding emotional systems- Ron Richardson begins his book by telling a story of how two different churches with the same belief systems can encounter the same situation on a Sunday morning and react entirely differently from each other. The reason behind their different responses has to do with the health of the emotional system within each congregation. Though people think and act as individuals, there are other group dynamics often at work that shape and influence each person's behavior. This is because no one is an island. Each one of us is affected by the reactivity of the people around us.

One of the keys to functioning in a healthy manner as a church is for the leaders to look at the church as a system rather than as a collection of isolated people. Every church is more than a collection of individual members. People in the church, as in any group, are intricately interconnected. They exist in a system that is much bigger and more powerful than the individual members. Each person both influences and is influenced by everyone else. Even though each person has individual strengths and liabilities, those attributes can change in different contexts or relationships (Richardson, 26).

In the following excerpt, Richardson uses a visual analogy to explain how the emotional forces of the system are at work within a congregation:

It is the emotional system of the church that is the most difficult to detect and to understand, let alone try to change. The emotional system is one of the most

powerful forces in any church or in any group of human beings. The health of the emotional system determines how well the other systems work. A poorly functioning emotional system will derail the best and most rational planning efforts.... Emotional systems are like delicately balanced mobiles. Any movement by any one part of the mobile, toward or away from the center of gravity, affects the balance of the whole mobile. This is true of the parts closest to the top of the mobile (the leadership), and only somewhat less true of the parts closer to the bottom. As soon as the mobile gets out of balance and hangs askew, it needs to be rebalanced to hang properly (Richardson, 30-31).

The element that unbalances the emotional system in the church is anxiety. When people feel threatened or under attack, the emotional system begins to get out of control, creating anxiety in the congregation. Richardson defines anxiety in this way:

Anxiety is a very uncomfortable feeling. It is more uncomfortable than fear, which is a reaction to the known. Knowing what we are afraid of gives some sense of control. The control we usually have in fearful situations is to stay away or avoid the situation.... This ability to distance provides us with at least some sense of control for ourselves.

Anxiety is less tangible and more amorphous than fear. For this reason, we feel out of control (Richardson, 43).

Richardson states that our anxiety level is directly influenced by how well our sense of self has been developed or affected by the circumstances in our lives:

The more sense of self we have and the more we experience ourselves as competent people, able to deal with the world's challenges, the less anxious we are. Anxiety increases when the sense of being a safe, secure, emotionally competent self is threatened; and when this happens, one way of dealing with the anxiety is to look for others to make it better for us (Richardson, 49).

The leader's role in an anxious system- What this means for church leaders, and recovery pastors in particular, is that leaders in an anxious emotional system must model a calming presence to reduce the anxiety level in the troubled congregation. Just as one person's anxiety can trigger another person's anxiety, so also the presence of a calm leader in the midst of anxiety can slow down the process before it gets out of control. This means that the leader must be differentiated from the emotional system by

maintaining a confident view of oneself to affect the anxiety level of the congregation. A leader's calming presence will absorb anxiety rather than generate it in the emotional system of the congregation.

The job of effective church leaders is to help keep down the level of anxiety in the emotional system of the congregation. When things are calmer, people are able to think more clearly about their options in the midst of stressful circumstances and develop a reasonable, workable plan of action. Effective leaders are able to help people manage their level of anxiety so they can accomplish these goals. They do this primarily by managing their own anxiety, and then, secondarily, by staying in meaningful contact with other key players in the situation. They do not tell others to "be calm." They simply bring their own calmness to the situation. By staying calm and yet connected to those who are anxious, these people help reduce the level of anxiety. People who do this are automatically positive and helpful leaders in the church, whether or not they hold an official office (Richardson, 51).

A leader's ability to remain differentiated and yet connected to the congregation's emotional system is an important part of recovery ministry. As the level of anxiety increases, the members of the church tend to become relationally fused, which creates a confusion of feelings and facts about the source of the group's anxiety level. A leader cannot allow himself to become fused with this emotional system if he intends to be a stabilizing and calming presence in the congregation. The differentiated leader is able to keep a clearer focus on the congregation's direction and priorities so that he is not drawn into this magnetic pull of a heightened level of anxiety within the group. Richardson explains the characteristics of a differentiated person in this way:

A higher level of differentiation means a person has:

1. the ability to perceive more accurately the reality of the situations, to not create threat that isn't really there, and to discern what is actually threatening and how;
2. the ability to identify his or her own opinions, beliefs, values, and commitments, and the principles of behavior that derive from these, as they are relevant to a particular situation;
3. the ability to think clearly and wisely about possible options for action and the likely consequences for each of these options;
4. and the ability to act flexibly within the situation on the basis of these perceptions, thoughts, and principles (Richardson, 86).

Identifying patterns of anxious reactivity- The differentiated leader will recognize that the increased anxiety level in the congregation will produce certain behavioral patterns of reactivity. A leader can avoid becoming fused or enmeshed into the anxiety level of the congregation by not joining those who are caught up in the heightened anxiety that permeates the congregation's emotional system when they feel threatened. Here are four common ways that people react when anxious:

1. *Compliance-* This pattern is where there is an outward appearance of cooperation, while inwardly (maybe unconsciously) resenting being “forced” into this behavior.

Reactive compliance often leaves the one requesting the changes confused or frustrated. This is because the compliant one agrees to make a change, but the change never actually happens, or is done incorrectly or poorly. The compliant one seems so nice that it is difficult to confront him or her with the actual lack of change (Richardson, 93).

2. *Rebellion-* “The rebellious person makes a point of doing or saying the exact opposite of whatever is requested. The rebel has a strong sense of his or her own freedom and ‘rights,’ and is sensitive to any demands or requests that seem unfair” (Richardson, 94).

3. *Power Struggle-* The third pattern of reactive response in an anxious system is the power struggle. “This strategy certainly had some of the rebel in it, but rather than doing just the negative side (‘I’m not going to do that!’), it includes another side: ‘but you better do this!’ In the power struggle, each side evaluates the other as wrong and tells the other what to do” (Richardson, 94-95).

4. *Emotional Distancing-* The last reactive pattern happens when people withdraw from engaging others on an emotional level, or they remove themselves from

active involvement in the congregational life and ministry. Often this response is because they don't know what else to do, so they give up on staying connected and disappear.

A wise recovery leader will avoid being captivated by any of these anxious patterns so that he can engage the emotional system as a change agent. Maintaining one's sense of self and one's role as a change agent is an essential strategy for bringing change to the dysfunctional reactions at work in the congregation.

You won't be able to change others or keep them from using these patterns with you, but if you focus on and can change your part in the reactive process, they may need to use these patterns less often and may find ways to be more direct and open with you. However, and here is the catch, you have to be willing to let go of the idea that they should be different from how they are, more like you (Richardson, 97).

2. The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation- Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech, & Trisha Taylor

This is another book that provides helpful guidelines using the application of family systems theory to congregational life and ministry. The authors first provide insight into the leader's personal journey of personal transformation. They examine the life of Jesus as a model of someone who lived as a leader with a differentiated self. In spite of the pressures and challenges that Jesus faced, he was able to maintain a clear sense of his identity and mission so that he fulfilled his Father's mission.

In the latter part of this book, the authors present insights about how the leader's home life can be transformed using family system theory and family of origin concepts. The development of personal spiritual disciplines is also encouraged as the means for growing as a transforming agent.

The role of the transformational leader- In the middle section of this book, the leader's ministry becomes transforming by applying living systems theory to

congregational life. Learning to think systems means learning to ask and answer these two questions: “what is my role in keeping this problem in place?” and “How can I change my role” (Richardson, 50)? Rather than focusing on the prominent symptoms of an anxious system (complaints and problems), the transformational leader looks under the surface at the process keeping the problem in place.

Acute and chronic anxiety- One critical insight is the ability to recognize the difference between acute and chronic anxiety. Acute anxiety is our reaction when we are facing a threat that is real and time-limited. However, with chronic anxiety, the threat is imagined or distorted rather than real. Chronic anxiety is not time-limited, meaning that the sense of threat will not go away on its own.

Chronic anxiety may be triggered in a system by some particular incident or issue, but once under way it develops a life of its own, independent of the triggering mechanism. It continues to be generated by our reaction to one another and to disturbance in the relational system. Once chronic anxiety hits the system, we live in a heightened chemical state of anxiety that prevents us from functioning at our best and sets us up to escalate additional symptoms of one sort or another. Unfortunately, as effective as the threat response is in keeping us alive during a moment of crisis, it creates a terribly ineffective state for a person to live in for any length of time. Under the influence of those powerful chemicals, our brain does not do its best thinking. We are narrowly focused and unable to think calmly. We react rather than respond. We take things personally; we become defensive. Such reactions are not helpful to a leader (Herrington, 36).

Emotional triangles in an anxious system- A chronic state of anxiety is maintained when some enabling or anxious feedback is given from another member of the congregation. This process is also called *triangling*.

Emotional triangles are the “molecules” of an emotional system. A two-person relationship is notoriously unstable. As long as the relationship is calm, things remain steady. But all it takes is for one person to begin to feel uncomfortable with something about the other, and the relationship moves toward instability. To manage the increased anxiety, one of the two can bring a third person into the triangle... It is important, though to understand that triangles, like anxiety or the togetherness force, are an aspect of human behavior that is neither good nor bad.

They just are. Triangles are in themselves neutral; they exist as part of human behavior. Operating without our awareness, however, they can work to intensify the anxiety within a system and destroy its relational health (Herrington, 52).

To break the cycle of emotional reactivity, the leader must bring a calming presence to detriangle the anxious atmosphere. The leader's aim is to stay emotionally connected to the anxious people while remaining emotionally neutral about the symptomatic issue.

The most strategic role in the system is that of the calm observer. Someone needs to be in the position of being able to see what is going on. Shouldn't it be you, the leader? As the anxiety in the system rises, so must our resolve to remain composed. As leaders, when we focus on the process we learn not to take sides on the presenting issue. Stay alert; the togetherness forces will become intense, calling for you as leader to arbitrate. Instead you must learn to stay focused on God, your principles, and your reactions. You must also learn to avoid taking responsibility for the relationship of the other two. In *Generation to Generation*, Friedman observed that the more one tries unsuccessfully to change the relationship of two others, the more likely the person is to wind up bearing the stress that rightfully belongs to the other two. Changing the lives of people is ultimately the work of God's Spirit. At times we feel compelled to take on that role ourselves, but to do so is foolish and fruitless (Herrington, 55-56).

Recognizing chronic anxiety- A wise leader will recognize the symptoms of a chronically anxious system. There are four symptoms that manifest when a group reaches the state of being chronically anxious. These insights are particularly helpful when dealing with a wounded congregation, as they explain the sustaining power behind the dysfunctional reactions that develop after a church experiences an earthquake event.

1. *Conflict-* Conflict emerges during time of anxiety when togetherness forces combine with *all-or-nothing thinking*. People begin to insist on their way as the only way. As others disagree, the level of anxiety rises, and the conflict spirals upward (Herrington, 58).
2. *Distance-* As anxiety rises, they withdraw emotionally, keeping relationships peaceful but superficial. Extreme expressions of distancing are known as cutoff, in which the relationships are broken off completely. Distant relationships in an emotional system are as much a symptom of increasing anxiety as is intense conflict... Superficial relationships keep conflict to a minimum, but they do not make the anxiety disappear. A congregation in which people refuse to interact at a more-than-superficial level is an anxious system. Distancing can show up in a

church in many ways. Cold worship services, people falling through the cracks, prayer requests that seldom go beyond the superficial, a problem with retention of new members, passive-aggressive behavior of a church leader or staff member—these and a host of other behaviors may be evident of a congregation dealing with anxiety through distance and cutoff (Herrington, 59-60).

3. *Overfunctioning and Underfunctioning*- Sometimes a system responds to anxiety by engaging in a scenario in which members unwittingly conspire to focus on one person (or part) who seems not to be doing so well (the underfunctioning one). To compensate for this underfunctioning, another member (or part) of the system works very hard (overfunctioning), sometimes complaining the whole time (Herrington, 60).

Projection- We have one other pattern of reacting to chronic anxiety. Rather than engaging in conflict, distancing ourselves from each other, or taking responsibility for others, we project our anxiety onto one member (or one part) of the system (Herrington, 61).

3. *How Your Church Family Works*- Peter L. Steinke

This is the third significant resource on the application of family systems theory to congregational ministry that was useful in my recovery ministry experience. Steinke has also written another book that covers the systems theory in more depth titled *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*. I have found that the *How Your Church Family Works* resource is more applicable to ministry in wounded congregations, so I will highlight some of the main points from this volume in this section.

Shock waves in the emotional system- Steinke explains that when systems are impacted by devastating events or things, shocks of a lesser magnitude set off similar reactive forces in the emotional system. When systems are affected they instinctively move toward self-preservation. If the anxiety is not lessened, the system reinforces the emotional tension and is locked into the system. After remaining a while in this state, the chronically anxious system may even become loyal to its own reactivity, perpetuating the high level of chronic anxiety. However, because the system was not intended to remain in this state, other characteristics will develop.

When anxiety is high, resilience is low. Behaviors are extreme and rigid; thoughts are unclear and disjointed. Anxious people speak harsh words or cut themselves off from others through silence. To manage their threatening situation, people hurry to localize their anxiety. They blame and criticize. Yet it is one thing for a system to be shattered by shocking events and another to be shackled by its own reactive tremors. Once a system fortifies its stability by its reactivity, it cannot get what it needs most: time and distance, calm and objectivity, clarity and imagination. It is caught in its own automatic processes. But a relationship system does not live by reaction alone but by every resource at its disposal. Therefore a system that maintains its stability by reactivity alone will not be stable in the long run. Continuous reactivity creates three processes that prevent the system from being resourceful and flexible—a shrinking of perspective, a tightening of the circle, and a shifting of the burden. Consequently it is not apt to repair itself, plan for the future, and find a new direction (Steinke, 43).

The recovery process- The recovery leader can provide the change influence needed to help the congregation break out of its reactive pattern of chronic anxiety. Steinke believes that one of the most effective ways to introduce change is to redefine the problem. If the people can see the whole pattern of interaction reframed, they may be able recognize how they are stuck in dysfunctional patterns of reactivity and lessen the anxiety level. Here are some questions that Steinke has used to move people toward reflection that leads to change:

1. What would it look like to you if you were happy, satisfied?
2. What is weakening your resources and strength?
3. Write a sentence to describe your problem. Then redefine your problem in another sentence without references to a single issue or person.
4. Who are the most motivated people in the congregation?
5. Where's your plan? What's your vision?
6. What would it take to have a pastor stay here ten years, twenty years?
7. What would be your own signs of a healthy congregation?
8. Can you imagine this congregation in five years being alive, thriving, etc.? How would you know it happened?
9. How would you be willing to invest yourself in the process of creating the image you defined above?
10. How do you understand what is happening here theologically or biblically (Steinke, 54)?

Steinke concludes that “change must be defined, and it must come from people who are capable of defining, who know where they want to accomplish” (Steinke, 55). The goal must be the health of the whole body, not just resolving the tension within the congregation’s emotional system. The recovery leader provides the perspective that this possibility can become a reality when the people can visualize the changes necessary and begin to adjust their expectations and reactions to lessen the anxious atmosphere in the church family.

Relationship systems can be renewed and made whole. But the wholeness emerges only when we go beyond our initial hypersensitivity and make use of our second level of response responding discriminately, consciously, and objectively. Without such clarity we have little sense of direction. We neither manage our own response nor stimulate the response of others (Steinke, 63).

However, Steinke is clear that this process cannot be speeded up to reduce the anxiety level of the emotional system under duress. To do so only increases the anxiety level of the group. The leader must “be a non-anxious presence, willing to be patient, as the process is worked out and completed” (Steinke, 100).

Here is a list of ten actions that he recommends to keep a group focused on the growth process:

1. Having a plan.
2. Expressing problems in terms of relationships.
3. Knowing what triggers anxiety.
4. Handling anxiety on the level of consciousness.
5. Be willing to invest in what is going to be.
6. Identifying strengths and resources.
7. Creating options.
8. Remaining on the side of challenge (toleration of pain, threat, sabotage).
9. Following the plan.
10. Asking questions (Steinke, 102).

The differentiated leader can provide a vital role in the recovery process for the group. Without visualizing a clear vision of what they can become, the congregation will

remain caught up in dysfunctional behaviors and chronic anxiety. Therefore, the leader points the congregation to the vision and maintains a steady course of guiding them to fulfill their hope for the future.

The vision that defines the group must be forged and safeguarded by leaders who are themselves well differentiated... Being a dreamer and overseer are effective roles to the degree that the leader functions with integrity and promotes responsibility in others. The leader achieves this by defining self, regulating one's own anxiety, staying connected to others, stimulating their resources, and staying the course (Steinke, 104).

D. The pastoral leader in recovery ministry

The identity and role of the leader in recovery ministry is an area that must be clearly defined before entering the earthquake zone of the wounded congregation. Otherwise the relational and emotional dynamics of the system can distort or distract the recovery leader from fulfilling the ministry task for which he came to this church. I have several favorite books on leadership identity and process. *The Making of a Leader* by J. Robert Clinton helped me to understand God's processes at work shaping me in the midst of my ministry experience. What I first viewed as setbacks and conflicts when facing leadership backlash was actually one of God's tests to mature my perseverance, clarity of vision, and faith. Clinton explains the recognizable pattern of this eight stage leadership process in this way:

1. The leader gets a vision (direction) from God.
2. The followers are convinced of the direction.
3. The group moves in the direction given.
4. The group experiences persecution, hard times, or attacks from Satan—spiritual warfare is common.
5. There is backlash from the group.
6. The leader is driven back to God to seek affirmation in spite of the action's ramifications.
7. God reveals Himself further: who He is, what He intends to do. He makes it clear that He will deliver.
8. God vindicates Himself and the leader (Clinton, 109).

Another book that is helpful for understanding the leadership maturing process is *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* by Reggie McNeal. McNeal believes that effective spiritual leaders must become skilled in understanding and developing matters of the heart, because this is what matters most to God. Maintaining the leader's heart is of utmost importance for the leader to maintain his vitality when the demands of ministry will deplete his energy and vision. McNeal surveys the lives of Moses, David, Jesus, and Paul to reveal a process for revealing the processes that God uses to shape a leader. These areas where a leader's heart is shaped are as follows:

- *Culture*- The unique background out of which the leader emerges.
- *Call*- The context in which God reveals the leader's mission.
- *Community*- The people whom God uses to mentor and equip the leader for ministry.
- *Communion*- The growth process of the leader's relationship with God.
- *Conflict*- How the leader grows through facing destructive forces in one's ministry.
- *Commonplace*- How the leader responds to the everyday challenges and opportunities in his leadership role (McNeal, xii-xiii).

These six categories gave me a framework upon which to develop a balanced growth process for understanding how to develop my heart as a leader. I read the chapter on conflict just before entering a significant leadership attack early in my present ministry assignment. McNeal explains that leader must expect conflict, so get over it and endure the pain, because "spiritual leaders must welcome conflict as a heart-shaping tool of God" (McNeal, 156). Those insights help me to reframe my perspective from God's purposes so that I was able to weather than storm.

Two books that I found highly influential for shaping my understanding of ministry from a biblical framework rather than business management or other contemporary leadership models were: *The 21st Century Pastor* by David Fisher, and

Empowered Church Leadership by Brian Dodd. These books challenged me to dig deeply into the New Testament to understand the vision and values for ministry that empowered the Apostle Paul to fulfill his call as a Christian leader. Fisher's development of Paul's leadership metaphors for ministry gave me a concrete way to envision my leadership role and function in recovery ministry. Dodd helped me see that "Pain is a part of God's plan for life-giving leaders and for all who follow Jesus" (Dodd, 66). Therefore, it is not something to be avoided in ministry, but to be embraced as part of counting the cost to engage a broken world as Christ's ambassador.

Pastors at Greater Risk by H. B. London and Neil Wiseman, and *The Wounded Minister* by Guy Greenfield are helpful resources for understanding the hazards and wounds that I was facing while engaged in pastoral ministry in wounded congregations. I learned that I could not handle challenges and heal from my wounds on my own. I needed help in the form of meaningful relationships with ministry peers and a ministry mentor to help me to process my ministry challenges and frustrations.

However, of all of the books that I have read in this field, in this section I intend to cover in depth one book that was particularly helpful for influencing my leadership identity and role as a change agent in recovery ministry: Robert Quinn's *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*.

The theory behind Quinn's book is the belief that everyone is a potential change agent, and that one person can change the larger system or organization in which he or she exists. However, what matters more in the effective change process is the person that we become rather than the leadership techniques or strategies that are used. This book is

about the process of becoming an internally driven leader who is able to draw upon his own resources to affect change in the system.

Incremental Change and Deep Change- Quinn believes that the reason most change strategies fail is because the most common approach focused on incremental change.

Incremental change is usually the result of a rational analysis and planning process. There is a desired goal with a specific set of steps for reaching it. Incremental change is usually limited in scope and is often reversible. If the change does not work out, we can return to the old way. Incremental change usually does not disrupt our past patterns—it is an extension of the past. Most important, during incremental change, we feel we are in control (Quinn, 3).

On the other hand, deep change requires new ways of thinking and behaving. It is discontinuous with the past and generally irreversible. “The deep change effort distorts existing patterns of action and involves taking risks. Deep change means surrendering control” (Quinn, 3).

Because organizations tend to systemize behavior and expectations, the formalization process tends to focus on becoming more efficient and effective. However, the organization will become over time structured and stagnant through this formalization process while the environment around changes. When this happens, the organization loses its internal and external alignment, and is faced with a choice: either adapt or take the road to slow death. Most times, incremental change will not recover the organization’s original vision and vitality. “Sometimes, we need to alter our fundamental assumptions, rules, or paradigms and develop new theories about ourselves and our surrounding environment. When this need emerges, we try to deny and resist it” (Quinn, 7). The cost to break free from the status quo is often determined to be too high a price to

pay to go against the way things are, so the path of least resistance is to attempt incremental change or face the slow death dilemma.

The characteristics of the slow death syndrome- Slow death begins when someone facing the decision between accepting the status quo or making deep organizational change, rejects the option for deep change. The gradual disintegration of the organization is the result. Here are the four most prominent characteristics of the slow death phenomenon:

1. *Pervasiveness-* The need for change is recognized, but the common attitude is “don’t rock the boat.” Denial is prevalent in the organization.

2. *Violation of Trust-* The leaders who recognize the need for deep change, but rather than initiating deep change, they keep busy doing other things.

In this scenario, self-interest triumphs over collective responsibility. The selection of slow death has some moral overtones. It involves a violation of trust and responsibility, often leading to guilt. Because of the moral implications, the issue becomes undiscussible in the organization while fully understanding that their organization is in serious trouble. The impact of this problem is enormous (Quinn, 19).

3. *Thirst for Vision-* People in the organization know that change is needed, but no one is willing to engage it. “People slowly lose hope and begin to feel trapped by their circumstances. They often cope by withdrawing or, conversely, by staying busy with insignificant issues” (Quinn, 19). At this point, people look to the leaders for a credible vision to overcome these troubling concerns.

4. *Burnout-* People lose their reserves. They have no energy left to invest in revitalization, so they become victims of burnout.

Strategies for confronting slow death on a personal level:

When the organization faces slow death, its members will choose one of these three responses:

Strategy 1: Peace and Pay- “Peace and pay means ‘don’t rock the boat,’ ‘maintain the status quo,’ ‘keep your head in a shell,’ ‘come in at eight and go home at five,’ ‘don’t take any risks” (Quinn, 22). However, Quinn states that their resignation traps them in a vicious cycle from which escape is difficult, so they passively choose the way of peace and join the legions of walking dead.

Strategy 2: Active Exit- This option focuses on the self-interest of the individual over that of the organization. They actively look for convenient ways to leave the system, which in effect contributes to the slow death at the organizational level.

Strategy 3: Deep Change- In this option the person recognizes that he has a choice. Though the process of deep change is painful, it is the only healthy alternative to choose when facing a slow death. As a result the person becomes empowered to change themselves so that they can be a positive agent of change within the system.

Quinn’s descriptions of organizational slow death syndrome and the strategies for responding to it were particularly helpful when explaining the reason for our church’s struggles to our Elder Board. It gave some handles for patterns of reactivity and frustration that had developed within our congregation. It also revealed patterns of departure by others in our congregation when no logical explanation was given for leaving. These insights gave our leadership team the foundation to finally address the downward cycles that were facing and the strategy for how to break free from them.

Experiencing continuous personal change- The process to become an effective change agent in an organization is to cultivate continuous personal change. A leader can't expect to bring deep change to a system unless he is first developing deep change on the personal level. The leader must confront his own immaturity, inconsistency, selfishness, and lack of courage before he can challenge others to do the same to bring change to the system. The power of personal example can be highly motivating for others to risk breaking out of the attitudinal and behavioral patterns that keep the organization locked in the slow death process.

One key to successful leadership is continuous personal change. Personal change is a reflection of our inner growth and empowerment. Empowered leaders are the only ones who can induce real change. They can forcefully communicate at a level beyond telling. By having the courage to change themselves, they model the behavior they are asking of others. Clearly understood by almost everyone, this message, based on integrity, is incredibly powerful. It builds trust and credibility and helps others confront the risk of empowering themselves (Quinn, 34-35).

The heroic journey- Quinn believes that the power of personal transformation is the catalyst for initiating change in the organization. He calls this aspect of the deep change process "The heroic journey." New energy is released in the group when one person resolves to challenge the old paradigms and to follow the path of personal transformation.

The hero's journey is a story of individual transformation, a change of identity. In embarking on the journey, we must leave the world of certainty. We must courageously journey to a strange place where there are a lot of risks and much is at stake, a place where there are new problems that require us to think in new ways.... To continue our journey is to reinvent the self. It is then that our paradigms change and we experience an "expansion of consciousness." We begin to realign ourselves with our surrounding environment. Not only do we view the world differently, but we view it more effectively (Quinn, 45-46).

....

Ultimately, deep change, whether at the personal or the organizational level, is a spiritual process. Loss of alignment occurs when, for whatever reason, we begin to pursue the wrong end. This process begins innocently enough. In pursuing

some justifiable end, we make a trade-off of some kind. We know it is wrong, but we rationalize our choice. We use the end to justify the means. As time passes, something inside us starts to whiter. We are forced to live at the cognitive level, the rational, goal-seeking level. We lose our vitality and begin to work from sheer discipline. Our energy is not naturally replenished, and we experience no joy in what we do. We are experiencing slow death....

Confronting our defense mechanisms leads to a necessary examination of self. To thwart our defense mechanisms and bypass slow death, we must confront first our own hypocrisy and cowardice. We must recognize the lies we have been telling ourselves. We must acknowledge our own weakness, greed, insensitivity, and lack of vision and courage. If we do so, we begin to understand the clear need for a course correction, and we slowly begin to reinvent our self. The transition is painful, and we are often hesitant, fearing that we lack the courage and confidence to proceed. We uncover a great paradoxical truth. Change is hell. Yet to not change, to stay on the path of slow death, is also hell. The difference is that the hell of deep change is the hero's journey. The journey puts us on a path of exhilaration, growth, and progress (Quinn, 78).

This extensive quote of Quinn's view of the heroic journey sounds very much like the biblical concepts of repentance and faith in the Christian life. We cannot expect systemic change in the wounded congregation without first confronting the reality of our own lack of integrity, our loss of vision, our self-centered orientation, and our desire for personal peace and comfort over the challenge to step out in faith to risk for the sake of gospel. The problem isn't "out there" in the organization, but deep inside of us.

Deep change requires more than the identification of the problem and a call for action. It requires looking beyond the scope of the problem and finding the actual source of the trouble. The real problem is frequently located where we would least expect to find it, inside ourselves. Deep change requires an evaluation of the ideologies behind the organizational culture. This process happens only when someone cares enough to exercise the courage to uncover the issues no one dares to recognize or confront. It means someone must be enormously secure and courageous. Culture change starts with personal change. We become change agents by first altering our own maps. Ultimately, the process returns us to the "power of one" and the requirement of aligning and empowering oneself before successfully changing the organization (Quinn, 103).

However, the power to change begins when we first give up control to God and follow Christ in faith and obedience. This transforming experience parallels what Jesus

told Paul in Second Corinthians 12:9—“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

This journey toward leading deep change in the organization is what Quinn calls the leadership process of “building the bridge as we walk on it.”

Organizational and personal growth seldom follows a linear plan. This is an important principle to remember. When people recount a history of growth, they often tell it in a linear sequence, suggesting a rationality and control that never really existed.

When we have a vision, it does not necessarily mean that we have a plan. We may know where we want to be, but we will seldom know the actual steps we must take to get there. We must trust in ourselves to learn the way, to build the bridge as we walk on it. Deep change is an extensive learning process. When we pursue our vision, we must believe that we have enough courage and confidence in ourselves to reach our goal. We must leap into the chasm of uncertainty and strive bravely ahead (Quinn, 83-84).

Quinn has written another book after *Deep Change* titled *Building the Bridge As You Walk On It*. In that book he explains the leadership development process of transformation, which he calls “the fundamental state of leadership.” This is a good follow up resource to better understand and apply the developmental concepts that he explains in *Deep Change*.

The internally driven leader- Another leadership concept that I found helpful in Quinn’s book has to do with his analysis of different leadership paradigms. Quinn believes that there are three basic leadership paradigms by which leaders operate.

The first is the *technical* paradigm, where the leader leads by means of his expertise and competence in the system. This leader demonstrates leadership by knowing how to do the job well. This leadership model also emphasizes following standards and procedures. Unfortunately, this mechanical style of leadership doesn’t take into account that people don’t function like machines. They need more guidance and support than just

telling them how to do their job right. Competence in a skill does not automatically transfer over to being an effective leader.

Quinn explains the *transactional* leadership paradigm in this way:

The transactional paradigm suggests that an organization is viewed as a political system, a coalition of political interests. Everyone has an agenda and a set of needs and is engaged in a variety of transactions where a wide array of resources is exchanged. Power accrues to the person who makes the most effective transactions (Quinn, 124).

This leadership model seeks to accomplish the organizational goals through using diplomatic compromise to get those in the organization to work together. However the vision and integrity of the organization may be lost or sacrificed in the process of developing coalitions and cooperation among the members of the organization.

The *transformational* paradigm is focuses on the fulfilling the organization's vision. Whereas in the first two leadership paradigms, personal survival is often a high value of the leader, the transformational leader keeps the vision and the values of the organization at the top of his priority list. Quinn calls this kind of leader as *the internally driven leader* because his leadership orientation and motivation comes from within.

This paradigm does not assume personal survival but instead vision realization at any cost. If the vision lives and thrives, it does not matter if the leader is fired, assassinated, or humiliated. The vision is far more important than personal survival.

Under the transformational paradigm, the organization is viewed not just as a technical or political system, but also as a moral system. There are certain values and principles that are more powerful than the political interests of any particular coalition.

A transformational leader will develop a plan of action, mobilize the workforce, and unleash power by vocalizing the core values of the system. Their source of credibility is their behavioral integrity. A leader must walk the walk and talk the talk. Every action must be in alignment with the vision. To fail on this dimension is to reduce the vision to an exercise in hypocrisy (Quinn, 124-125).

This transformational leadership paradigm is similar to the kind of leadership that is required for effective recovery ministry in a wounded congregation. The recovery leader must be an internally driven leader who keeps focused on pursuing God's vision for the health and growth of the church. This internally driven orientation will help him avoid being sidetracked by lesser pursuits or by pleasing certain members of the congregation who want their personal agendas and preferences to be implemented over the church's vision for the future.

The transformational leader must also stay relationally connected to the emotional system of the congregation while working toward initiating change from within the system. The transformational leader must remain connected while remaining differentiated at the same time so that he does not get caught up in the chronic anxious state of the wounded congregation. Watching the recovery leader model personal continual change is an integral part in the transformation process for the whole congregation.

Quinn concludes his book with this final statement about the impact that a transforming leader can make in the larger organization:

One person can make a difference. One person can make deep change in an organization. However, deep change comes at a great cost. Enacting change means taking some risks. When we take the necessary risks, we become self-empowered. We begin to better align our internal self with our external world. As our internal power base grows, we become confident and make genuine progress toward our goal. We become energized and slowly recognize that we can make a difference. We begin to understand that one person really can change the system (Quinn, 219).

III. Summary of Literature Review Chapter

The resources highlighted in this chapter helped to provide me with a conceptual ministry "toolkit" of how to approach and untangle the emotional and relational

dysfunctions existing in a wounded congregation. Much like an EMT specialist arriving at the scene of an accident, the recovery leader must quickly decide what areas need immediate attention through analysis and diagnosis. By having an understanding of some of the common dysfunctions and conflicts in wounded congregations, I was able to determine which issues were the most important to deal with promptly and which ones didn't require urgent pastoral attention.

Knowledge of Ron Susek's firestorm phases of church conflict gave me a conceptual framework for understanding the nature and development of church conflict and provided practical guidelines for a plan of action to slow down the firestorm's forces at work in the church. Once the relational tensions in the congregation were lessened, we were better able to address and resolve the source of the conflicts.

I also applied some of the practical steps suggested by Kenneth Quick, Neil Anderson, and Charles Mylander to help our congregation overcome the spiritual dysfunctions that keep our church from releasing the pain of the past and looking forward to a positive future. The *Setting Your Church Free Prayer Service* format was especially helpful for addressing the congregation's pain that needed to be released before we were able to experience healing from traumatic past events.

Family systems theory was another useful tool that provided a helpful framework for understanding the emotional systems that are at work under the surface. Helping the people to recognize the symptoms of a chronically anxious system in a wounded congregation eased their feelings of instability. A wise leader will guard against being drawn into the congregation's anxiety level by not becoming reactive when more

aftershocks occur. A calming, non-anxious leadership presence will help bring stability and security back in to the church family.

Finally, the role of the recovery leader as a transformational change agent requires a firm grasp of how to bring about deep change in an organization as an internally driven leader. This strategic role requires that the recovery leader stays internally focused on God's vision and plan for the health and mission of the church, so that he will not be distracted by other pressures at work within the congregation, or be discouraged when faced with setbacks in the church's recovery process. I found that Quinn's insights gave me a practical model for understanding how a recovery leader can bring about deep change in the wounded congregation by first bringing about deep change in my personal life and ministry.

Chapter Four- Project Design

My original intention for this project was to design two surveys—one for pastors who had experience in ministry to wounded congregations, and one for congregational members who have been through a recovery ministry process—to draw out insights that would be useful for developing a recovery ministry plan for wounded congregations.

While working on the research component of this project, I realized that implementing the survey approach would not be very productive. I found very few pastors who had ministry experience in wounded congregations. Also, the congregational responses that I received from the surveys were not as descriptive and revealing as I had expected.

I decided that a better approach for my project design would be to present a collage of personal perspectives that cover different experiences and expertise related to recovery ministry. I scheduled appointments for personal interviews with people who represented a variety of viewpoints that would benefit someone who would be involved in some aspect of ministry in wounded congregations.

My plan for the personal interview was twofold. I asked a few guided questions that covered the person's understanding of ministry in wounded congregations. I also wanted each person to share his or her story regarding their involvement with ministry to wounded congregations. The insights gleaned from these personal interviews are recorded in this chapter.

Interview with Dr. Robert Gustafson (Jan. 4, 2007)

The Immanuel Evangelical Free Church experienced the shockwave of their Senior Pastor's resignation for moral failure in August 2000. A second earthquake

erupted at the annual congregational meeting on January 21, 2001 when a minority group attempted to force a vote to return their former pastor to the church's ministry before approving the annual budget for 2001. When their agenda was denied by the majority, several launched inflammatory attacks upon the rest of the members and then stormed out of the meeting. This congregational split intensified the pain they were already suffering from the betrayal and loss of their former pastor.

Robert Gustafson began his interim ministry at the Immanuel Evangelical Free Church in January 2001. Since his retirement from fulltime ministry in 1989, Robert has served a number of churches as an intentional interim pastor with Interim Pastor Ministries. An interim ministry agreement with a congregation initially covers a minimum of three months of ministry involvement. This contract may be extended on a month to month basis thereafter. Robert's interim ministry at Immanuel EFC lasted for four months.

The purpose of this interim ministry covers a multitude of congregational needs:

- To keep the ministry of the local church going at an even keel between pastorates. Here local church leaders often make a big mistake. They look at the budget and decide it is a good time to cut back and save money by just filling the pulpit on Sundays. If they do, at least three things usually happen. First, attendance tends to drop off. Secondly, parishioners will often reduce their giving because they think the money is not needed, and then it becomes hard to get back to full giving strength later. Thirdly, a message is sent to both the congregation and the community that the church is not prepared to meet all needs at this time. And lastly, if there are any serious church problems it can be devastating.
- To provide well-planned worship services each week and to keep the congregation excited about what is going on.
- To demonstrate experienced pastoral care and leadership at these important interim seasons in the life of a church. Through the ministry of

an experienced interim pastor, the time between pastorates can be one of renewal and growth, and of developing greater wisdom toward new leadership.

- To solve serious church problems before a new pastor arrives so he does not inherit them.
- To continue the ministry to shut-ins, the hospitalized and to visitors.
- To serve as a buffer following a long term pastor before a new pastor comes on the scene with perhaps a new and different vision for the congregation. It is usually very difficult for a new pastor to take over right after a long term pastor.
- To give careful attention to supporting church boards and committees so that all other ministries of the congregation go forward.
- To keep the church alive, gaining new strength and wisdom, so that when the new pastor arrives the congregation will be prepared to meet the challenges of the new leadership God has provided (<http://www.interimpastors.com/Purpose%20Page.htm>).

Before coming to Immanuel EFC, Robert had previous experience with interim ministry in a wounded congregation in Milton, Ohio. That church had also lost its pastor due to moral failure. The congregation responded well to his interim ministry, which lasted nine months, and the church lost only 10% of its members and giving after their earthquake experience. Robert believes that the church's strong small group ministry was responsible for stabilizing and retaining the people that were traumatized by the pastor's misconduct.

Robert believes that when beginning ministry in a wounded congregation, it is important to be an impartial listener: "I started out my ministry at Immanuel by not taking sides in the conflict, if at all possible. I would listen to people talk about their situation. I felt that this gave me everybody's ear—that at least they would then listen to what I had to say."

Robert also avoided the temptation to provide a quick fix to cover up the pain caused by the pastor's misconduct:

I didn't criticize the pastor publicly or the situation, yet I didn't preach forgiveness. I didn't say that we have to forgive this guy at all. I tried to be compassionate without being hypocritical. It was very hard to do—to be compassionate with all of them, even when I thought that maybe some of them were part of the problem.

Robert said that the most difficult people to deal in this kind of ministry were with those who expected him to make a complete reconciliation so that the former pastor could come back to the church, or those who wanted him to correct everything quickly and move the church forward.

Robert also believes that it is important to establish a stable pastoral presence within the turbulent storm of emotions swirling about in the congregation. It is also essential to restore the congregation's respect for the pastoral office, especially after a betrayal of trust by the former pastor. Pastoral credibility and trust is rebuilt by faithfully fulfilling the duties of preaching, pastoral care, and the administrative concerns of the congregational ministry.

I asked Robert if there were any particular preaching themes that he found effective during this kind of ministry. For the most part, he felt that he didn't have a preaching agenda while serving as the interim pastor. However, the theme that he used to start his ministry at Immanuel came from Acts 27 about facing the storms of life. He preached that storms come unexpected to us, but not to God—God knows that there is trouble in the boat, and that He is with them. Another point that he preached was that

when we go through a storm experience, we will be further along to where God wants us to be than we were before the storm came upon us.

When asked how he was able to maintain his personal well being during this turbulent time in the church, Robert said that there were three things that helped him stay balanced and focused:

1. “Be careful, because you can also fall.” Watchfulness over his personal life was a high priority.

2. “You just go as far as you can with the people. There comes a time when you have to step outside of yourself to maintain balance.” Knowing one’s limitations is important to not get overwhelmed by the great demands of the work.

3. “Try to remember the long range project—it’s painful, but it’s not the end.” Robert tried to maintain an optimistic viewpoint that God had him right where he wanted him to be. He knew that this congregation would not be healed and their issues wouldn’t be resolved quickly: “It’s a crazy mess. It looks like it will never unwind and be free of knots...and some of them don’t!”

I asked Robert what advice he would give to someone considering recovery ministry. His answer was this: “My advice is to stay away from it! It’s a place that no one should have to go through, but there are some people who can handle this kind of unique situation.” Robert recalled a pastor named Victor Walters who had the ability to go into the toughest situations and work them through. When I asked him what were the qualities that Victor possessed that were necessary for recovery ministry, Robert replied:

“Victor was a deeply spiritual man, highly educated and intellectual, and he also had a keen insight into people. Victor had a physically imposing presence, but he was tender, loving, and kind. He was a force in and of himself, but he did not steamroll over people.”

After my interview with Robert, I asked some members of Immanuel EFC what they remember and value about Robert’s interim ministry in their congregation. Here are the descriptions that I heard about him: “Robert was a stabilizing presence at a critical time in the church’s crisis experience.” “Robert has a sharp mind. He was honest and direct.” “He demonstrated a depth of wisdom that we needed from his seasoned ministry experience.”

Teri Schroll, Immanuel EFC’s office manager, wrote the following quote in her congregational survey about the stabilizing ministry that Robert had in her life during that turbulent time:

Our interim pastor kept me focused on my task. He encouraged me, he prayed unceasingly, and he reminded me to really listen to the Holy Spirit... God used him in a mighty way to minister to our church. He was real, honest, and he listened. I thank God for him always. He and his wife were a blessing to me.

Finally, one member shared this insight about the impact of Robert’s ministry in this congregation: “When I first met Robert, I wondered—what an old guy like him teach us? In the end, he taught us quite a lot!”

Interview with Rev. Paul Meiners (Jan. 25, 2007)

Paul Meiners served in the Eastern District office of the Evangelical Free Church for eleven and a half years. He was our District Superintendent from July 1998 until his retirement on December 31, 2006. The Eastern District Association (EDA) is an

association of about 130 Evangelical Free churches located in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

The district staff support our churches by providing services such as: healthy church networks and training, church planting strategies and support, urban-intercultural strategies and ministries, placement services for pastors and congregations, conflict resolution, training for pastors and church leaders, individual church consulting on a variety of issues, ministerial relationships for advocacy and accountability, licensing and credentialing of pastors, and kingdom partnerships with support ministries.

Paul became involved with Immanuel EFC when the former pastor resigned due to his admission of moral failure. Paul stated that “the EFCA does have systems in place to deal with pastoral failures of any kind. Of course, the pastor and his wife must be willing to avail themselves of those resources.” It was Paul’s responsibility to collect his ordination certificate and return it to the home office until a two year restoration process was completed.

Paul said that he became the “bad guy” for some in the congregation because he represented “the face of the EDA.” He was the one who had to tell them that the former pastor wouldn’t be coming back. Several angry members were extremely caustic toward him because they believed that their former pastor should be forgiven and allowed back into the ministry. Paul met several times with the Elder Board, and he spent many hours talking to the chairman on the phone to help the leadership team determine how to best navigate through the conflicts and trauma generated by this earthquake experience in the church. Paul stated that the Elder Board had been badly burned and came under severe

criticism by many people in the church, so that by the time he became involved in the resolution process, it was already a very unhealthy situation.

I asked Paul about his role in giving oversight and leadership to the congregations that were associated with the Eastern District—What did he do in his role as the District Superintendent that would help to prevent or overcome congregational conflicts in the district churches?

Paul said that he had two priorities that focused primarily on his ministry to church leaders. His most important priority was to try to establish a good relationship with the senior pastors of the churches. In this way, if tensions were developing in the church's ministry, the senior pastor would be more open to contact Paul and the district staff for counsel and support.

His second priority was to meet with the entire church leadership team to discuss and resolve their issues. He believed that it was unwise to try to resolve issues by meeting individually with the people who were part of the conflict issue.

I found that in most cases, the source of conflict brewing in a congregation came from a small group of people who were causing the problem. I determined never to meet with just a discontented member. If they called me, I would remind them that whatever they tell me is not confidential—that I would also call the senior pastor to discuss this matter.

Paul said that the amount of time that a district superintendent would need to invest in meetings, interviews, and composing a written report for the leadership team and congregation requires a minimum of forty to one hundred hours. However, this involvement in conflict intervention did not always work out positively. "Sometimes we might have saved the church from total extinction, but it didn't resolve the ongoing problems in the congregation. At other times, you end up being the 'bad guy' because

you are asked to confront people and issues that won't be received well by some of the members."

Paul said that the amount of investment that a district superintendent can make in conflict intervention comes down to one's skill level and time availability. "A district superintendent can have three to five of these church conflict situations going on at one time. You can easily burn out if you try to be the one who solves all of their problems. It can really take a lot out of you." Paul said that at times it is best to use outside mediation, if possible, to do the more extensive work of analysis and to prepare a conflict resolution strategy.

Paul gave me two words of advice for pastors who are working within a troubled congregation:

1. "Be careful who you choose as Elders and your leadership team. It is important that those who are selected be thoroughly trained and spiritually mature, or else you are going to have problems."

2. "Remember that it's okay to let some people go. You don't have to keep everybody happy." Too often we leaders think that those who are disgruntled need to be won over to our side, when it may be the best use of our time and resources to encourage them to find another congregation where they will be more compatible with the ministry vision and values.

Finally, I asked Paul what are the available resources in the district that can help support pastors who are working through conflict in their congregational ministries. He mentioned our district has Healthy Church Network meetings for pastors provide a meaningful opportunity for mutual encouragement, counsel, and sharing of resources.

Also, the district provides conferences and forums to discuss relevant ministry issues, as well as providing a larger perspective from which to view one's ministry. Trained counselors and mentors within our district are also available to provide additional help and resources to those working in difficult church ministry environments.

Interview with Rev. John Myers (Jan. 18, 2007)

John Myers served on staff of the Eastern District Association of the Evangelical Free Church of America for six and a half years as the Director of Church Planting. However, John's ministry was not limited to just training and coaching church planters. He also was involved with pastors and congregations as a church health consultant and also was a facilitator in the Healthy Church Network Pastor meetings within our district. John's extensive travel schedule kept him regularly connected with many pastors in our district for encouragement and counsel.

John not only is my good friend; he also became my ministry mentor after I struggled through the conflict and betrayal by the Elder Board last year. This was my most challenging trial that I had gone through in twenty years of ministry experience. John made a commitment to visit me to coach and pray with me every other week. He became my sounding board to help me process my thoughts, feelings, and ministry plans while I recovered from the aftershocks of my personal and ministry trauma.

I asked John for his counsel concerning what kind of strategy and resources he would recommend for a recovery leader entering a wounded congregation, and also what preventive strategy could be used for church leaders to maintain health and balance in their ministries.

John stated that there are two priorities that a recovery leader should have in place when beginning his ministry. First, “he needs an outside listening ear—a mentor who is an experienced pastor and who understands ministry issues and the components of a healthy church.” It is important that this person is outside of the church so that he can give an objective perspective of the situation. This mentor will help guide him through the mess of ministry, as well as being a prayer partner and a listening ear for the recovery leader to share his burdens and concerns.

The second component is that the pastor has a clear understanding of his role as a leader when entering the wounded congregation: “The pastor needs to gain the trust of the congregation and its leaders, and this will take time. He regains their trust by fulfilling his ministerial duties—faithful preaching, being there for people who are sick, and doing well the other aspects of pastoral ministry.”

John believes that the recovery leader’s role when starting out must be as a chaplain/ shepherd in the congregation: “You can’t start as a directive leader. You have to build respect and trust among the leaders and congregation. This may take at least two to three years for building these relationships and gaining trust. You don’t demand the right to be the leader. You earn the right to be the leader.”

Another important part of a recovery leader’s strategy is to establish a leadership strategy within the congregation: “The pastor has to *be* a good leader, and he needs a system and plan to train leaders both formally and informally. This may happen during times of group instruction, or meeting one-on-one for lunch or when playing golf together. He must concentrate early on developing his leadership core and a leadership community of potential leaders for the future.”

This strategy will become especially important so that when it is time to shift the recovery leader's role to act as the key leader in vision casting for the church's future. This vision casting role can be done in a myriad of ways—preaching messages, instruction at board meetings, in one-on-one meetings, newsletters, banners, etc. John stated that this is an important step for bringing the church through the recovery process: “You have to move them from ‘This is their church,’ to ‘This is our church,’ to ‘This is the community’s church.’ You have to point them to the future so that they stop looking at their wounds and catch a vision of new life and ministry in the community. In this way, the healing/ recovery will happen from the inside out.”

I asked John about his role to help churches to become healthy churches. John views his role as a church health consultant much like a doctor who diagnoses a patient's illness and who writes a prescription for recovery. However, it is the patient's responsibility to act on the advice of the consultant and follow through with the prescription. John said that it is unfortunate that most church leaders wait until they have serious problems before they call for help! “If churches called when they were healthy, we could have showed them how to become healthier.” He recommends that healthy churches have a church health checkup every year, and sick churches should have a checkup every four months to evaluate their progress toward health.

John was trained to use the *Healthy Church Survey* material for evaluating a churches strengths and weaknesses in their ministries. This material was developed by the EFCA to help church leaders understand the basic components of a healthy church and to evaluate their congregation in each of these areas of church health.

John said that the most important person for making this program work in the local church is the senior pastor:

The senior pastor has to be on board with this process. It will only work if he takes his role seriously as the leader. Otherwise, this effort will be a waste of our time. The senior pastor must gauge his commitment to the church and his expectations as the primary leader role before going through this process. If he is not committed to stay in the church and work through this process, he shouldn't begin the Healthy Church Survey.

The first part of the Healthy Church survey focuses on the leadership perspective of the congregation. Both formal and informal leaders should be included in this process to gain a baseline of the strengths and weaknesses of the church's ministry. A second survey is taken by members of the congregation. John believes that only about 25 to 30 respondents are necessary to give the congregational portrait of the church's strengths and weaknesses.

The next phase is to hold a healthy church seminar with the church leaders. This seminar will not only help them understand their church health scores from the surveys. It will also present teaching on how to develop a clear mission statement, how to recognize the church's core values, how to design a disciple making process, and how to train leaders who will lead a healthy church. John suggests that an excellent resource for church leadership to study is *The Purpose Driven Church Study Guide*, published by Saddleback Church.

A final area of discussion in our interview was about other resources that can help support a recovery leader while leading a congregation between the fault lines of recovery. John suggested three areas for the pastoral support:

1. A peer support group- “These groups are a great place to learn from one another and pray for each other. Make the time to join a group of pastors who are in the trenches of ministry together.” John strongly urges church planters that he has mentored to get together regularly with other church planters to share their ministry experiences and challenges.

2. Personal counseling- “You need to have someone who can help you unpack your personal pain and issues.”

3. Support for the pastor’s family- “The pastor’s wife carries a heavy burden. She needs an outside source, someone beyond the congregation to share her burdens.”

John believes that it is very important to have these support systems in place, because a pastor can’t carry all of the leadership responsibilities and burdens by himself.

Interview with Rev. Omar Zook (Jan. 4, 2007)

After I went through a painful conflict experience with the Elder Board last year, my ministry mentor, John Myers, encouraged me to meet with his friend, Omar Zook. Omar is the Associate Pastor of Pastoral Care at the Evangelical Free Church of Hershey (EFCH). He has served in this church ministry for about nine years.

Omar is not only responsible for the pastoral care ministry within the EFCH congregation; his counseling ministry extends beyond the local church to serve pastors and ministry leaders in the larger community. Since 1990, EFCH is recognized by the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) as one of its Recovery Churches for special ministry to pastors, ministry leaders, and their families that have gone through a personal or ministry crisis. The purpose of the EFCA’s Recovery Ministry is to provide a comprehensive and coordinated support team within a local congregation that will

support and restore pastors, missionaries, and Christian workers who have left their ministries for reasons of moral failure, conflict, or burnout. This program requires a minimum of two years commitment by the participants to complete the restoration process. A team of caregivers is assembled to help the ministry leader and family address their personal, spiritual, financial, and vocational concerns through the recovery process. Omar believes that the local church is the best environment to create a healing culture that ministers to these hurting people.

Omar is also involved in personal counseling for pastors who need a safe place to work through their personal and ministry issues. He believes that this support system is often overlooked by those involved in ministry: “This is absolutely a critical need: Who pastors the pastor? Who helps them to unpack their personal issues?” Pastors have a variety of unique pressures and problems that they encounter within their ministries, family life, and personal lives. Unless they have someone who can provide the spiritual care they need, they often continue to accumulate unhealthy stress that affects their personal life and ministry. Omar believes that pastors should have a place where they can go for both clinical and spiritual care. Most of Omar’s counseling with pastors deals with helping them work through personal issues rather than church issues, such as depression, anxiety, friction and conflict in relationships, and family pressures and crises.

Omar also believes that it makes a difference to meet in a church setting rather than in a professional clinic. As a pastoral counselor on a church staff, he is not under the restrictions and policies of being responsible to a managed care company for how he spends his time with people in his counseling appointments. He views his pastoral care service to pastors as an extension of the Evangelical Free Church of Hershey’s ministry,

which means that he also doesn't have to charge them for his ministry to them.

“Professional counselors are obligated to focus on clinical issues and often neglect the importance of time spent in prayer and Scripture because third party providers are only concerned with the clinical side of the treatment process.” However, Omar believes that this spiritual care dimension is a vital component for resolving one's personal and interpersonal issues.

Over the course of six monthly meetings, I met with Omar to unpack my personal issues and to process my painful feelings of betrayal and loss. Omar listened intently while I told my story. He asked timely reflective questions to help me sort out my confusion and frustration with what had happened. His objective perspective helped me to distance myself far enough away from the personal trauma to see things more clearly.

After several visits I felt that I was finally getting a handle on my emotions and a better understanding of what I had been through. My energy and creativity levels that were depleted from the conflict were recharging, and my ministry vision and focus was clearer as I began planning for the future. I know that I could have not done this work alone, especially while trying to lead the congregation through their own pain and loss. Omar's ministry in my life was a vital support during a critical time in my life and ministry this past year.

Omar said that he has also met with a number of pastors from outside of the Evangelical Free Church. He has a special concern to “pastor the pastor” through the personal challenges and trials of life and ministry: “I try to make it a priority with my schedule and time if there is a pastor in need. It's a high honor and a high privilege for me to work with pastors.”

Interview with Rev. Dave MacKenzie (Jan. 9, 2007)

Dave MacKenzie's ministry as a recovery leader is unique in that he took on this assignment as an "insider" rather than entering a wounded congregation from the outside. The Bridgeway Community Church went through an "extreme makeover" with Dave at the helm of the recovery process. Dave is one of those guys in ministry who shoots straight and isn't willing to allow anyone or anything to distract the ministry from fulfilling its purpose. I asked him to share with me how this unique transformation took place, and what it cost him as a leader to navigate the church through this metamorphosis process. Here is his story and his lessons learned along the journey to recovery.

The York Gospel Center had a long history of promoting a passion for evangelism and missions since its founding in 1936. The founding pastor's ministry lasted 29 years, establishing a solid foundation for the church's vision and mission. At one point, the church's membership had grown to around 700, and they committed more than 50% of its budget--\$250,000 to support their missionaries. However, internal conflicts developed as the church culture shifted. The church began cycling through a series of pastors every three years.

A clash of church cultures led to a severe church split in 1989 when the senior pastor was pressured to resign by a combative minority. When the senior pastor finally did resign, around 250 members also left the church. They asked him to form another congregation in the area. Dave said that the leadership never asked the "why" questions to get to the root of its systemic problems.

Dave joined the staff at the York Gospel Center in March 1991 to serve as their Youth/ Christian Education/ Singles Pastor. However, within a couple of years, the

senior pastor resigned. Dave took on the challenge and became the interim pastor while also covering his other ministry responsibilities. In 1994, an injury from a taxi cab accident forced Dave out of his pastoral duties in the church for a time. While Dave was on a mission trip in Romania, a new senior pastor was called to lead the church. By 1996, these unresolved internal conflicts dropped the congregation's membership from 550 to 150. However, the leadership avoided "why" question once again.

The leadership finally called a church consultant to help them determine what to do next. After a twelve hour meeting with the consultant, the senior pastor and Dave were called in at 1:00 AM. The senior pastor was fired and Dave's pastoral responsibilities were reduced to just youth ministry. At a congregational meeting the next evening, the consultant recommended that Dave become the senior pastor of the church. He said, "I believe that God might have an inside job for who should lead this church." Dave was given a pilot run for one month as the senior pastor. He accepted the position after receiving affirmative answers from the Elder Board to these two questions: "Will you permit me to lead, and will you protect me when I lead?" Dave also asked that a congregational vote would affirm his leadership. By the time that Dave was asked to become the senior pastor in 1998, only 100 members remained.

Dave said that he realized that "the church was falling apart, and desperate times require desperate measures." For two years they attempted a hybrid form of worship to keep the peace and to make everyone happy. However, the blended worship format didn't work, and the internal conflicts deepened. At this point, Dave realized the reculturing of the church required that they make radical changes and then "let the chips fall where they may." He realized that the visitation pastor needed to go because his attitudes and actions

prevented the church leadership from moving forward. Dave knew that this staff termination would cost them more people, but he decided that it was a necessary risk to turn the church around. “I realized that I had to cash in all my leadership chips to settle this problem.” About 50 more people left when Dave “retired” the visitation pastor. However, the leadership team finally began to ask the “why” questions necessary to turn things around.

In 1999 we were overseeing the death of a church. The church needed to die and I was to oversee its funeral. We decided that we needed to power down every entity of the church. We disbanded the church and reincorporated with the state of Pennsylvania; we revised and resubmitted the legal documents to change our name, and our bylaws. We rewrote our doctrinal statement and revised our strategies and structures.

The church was reborn as the Bridgeway Community Church. Dave remarked, “This change wasn’t in name only, and it wasn’t just a turnaround church or a recultured church. Bridgeway started as a new church plant.” Radical changes marked their new beginning. They changed over to Christian rock music, redefined their leadership, and repurposed the membership. After a year and a half study on what an elder was to look like, all twelve were asked to reapply to the leadership team, and only half of the Elders chose to return. The mission of their church has now shifted from problem-driven to purpose-driven, and they have developed a culture of leadership that attracts and encourages new leaders to get involved in their mission.

I asked Dave how he maintained his sanity and his family’s well-being during those turbulent times. He told me, “I don’t think that I could ever this again or want to do this again. The physical, emotional, and spiritual demands upon me and my family were costly.” One of his favorite leadership quotes comes from Ernest Shackleton in his book *South: The Endurance Expedition*: “Loneliness is the penalty of leadership.” Dave

understood that taking on the leadership challenge of this congregation would be costly to him.

Dave's survival strategy during this recovery ministry was centered in his running program. He ran every day to get rid of the buildup of toxins from ministry stress. "It gave me the coping skills that I needed for surviving the hell that I went through. The disciplined practice of exercise and prayer recharged my soul."

Dave's relationship with family was another part of his support system. "I have an incredibly connected relationship with my wife. We also talked openly with our daughters about what was happening. They came to know both the good and the bad of the church."

Another support system for Dave was looking to ministry mentors and peers for wisdom and encouragement. Dave consulted with his dad (a denominational ministry leader) at least weekly by phone. He asked him a lot of questions about how to handle these difficult issues. Likewise, a couple of seasoned area pastors were instrumental in encouraging Dave while going through the aftershocks of these earthquake experiences.

Dave also said that he couldn't have done this transformation ministry alone. "I had the dream team Elder team. They faced every crisis with me, the high times and the low times together. I had never once seen their backs. They were loyal to the hilt, and they even took some bullets for me. I was so happy that they were on my team."

Finally, I asked Dave what advice he would give to someone intending to take on a recovery ministry assignment. His main point was this: "Be incredibly clear on your philosophy of ministry and the strategies and structures that support your ministry vision.

It has to be as clear as a cloudless moon. I've been told that it is far easier to do a church plant than to go through the weirdness of what we've done here."

Dave is one of those rare breeds of a leader who has seen the fruits of perseverance and of making courageous decisions for the well being of the church's vision and mission. The Bridgeway Community Church stands as an example of what God can do when both the leadership and the people are committed to follow his will and his way to recovery from an earthquake experience.

Interview with Dr. Gene Heacock (Jan. 30, 2007)

I have known Gene Heacock for nearly twenty years, from when we first roomed together at a pastor's retreat while ministering in New England. I found in my friendship with Gene a kindred spirit and someone who challenges me to not settle for anything less than pursuing God's glory. We share common "war wounds" in our ministry experiences and we share similar passions to see God's presence and power move mightily in our nation. Gene was also my choice to preach a charge to the candidate at my ordination ceremony in 1990.

Over the course of his twenty-nine years of ministry experience, Gene has served in a variety of ministry settings: as a pastor, as an instructor, and as a church consultant in the areas of church renewal, transformational leadership, and conflict resolution. Gene is also the co-founder of "Partners with Christ," a prayer and renewal ministry. He has experienced and observed many of the pressures and hazards of pastoral ministry in the 21st century. Gene is therefore well qualified to serve in his present ministry position as the Executive Director of The Sandberg Leadership Center of Ashland Theological Seminary. The vision of the Sandberg Leadership Center is to "serve as a catalyst for

generating new models of Christian leadership by bringing together leaders from the church and society for dialogue on and response to contemporary issues of character and ethics” (<http://ashland.edu/seminary/slc.html>).

Gene believes that the state of pastoral ministry today requires a new model and training approach for developing longevity in ministry. He said that “pastoral ministry is one of the most privatized professions today. Pastors tend to go at it alone in their ministries. There is a general lack of partnership and networking with other resources and groups, which is now a common practice in the business and medical professions.” This tendency can be influenced by at least two common tendencies in contemporary ministry. Most forms of church polity lead to isolation from outside support systems. Also, Gene believes that the “one man show—big man theory” of pastoral ministry is a product of the industrial model of leadership, and may even trace as far back to the middle ages!

As a result, the areas of personal health, effectiveness, and longevity in pastoral ministry have suffered. Here are some recent statistics that reveal the current state of pastoral ministry in North America:

- Most Protestant pastors make their greatest impact in a church between the 5th and 14th years of their pastorate in that location. Yet, the average length of a pastorate is less than five years.
- 70% of pastors do not have a close friend, confidant, or mentor.
- 50% - 60% of church planters close the plant and the effort dies.
- 90% say their Bible School/Seminary Training did not prepare them for what they face day-to-day in the church.
- Only 10% finish the race and reach age 65 as a pastor.
- Two-thirds say their congregation has been in conflict in the past 2 years.
- 80% of pastors’ spouses wish their spouse would choose another profession.
- Nationally 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month due to burnout, moral failure, or conflict in the church. That’s 18,000 per year!
- 1 out of every 4 of those who left reported they were motivated by conflict with the denomination or a “belief that church headquarters was not supportive.”

- 50% of those who begin in the ministry leave after their first pastorate in less than 5 years never to return to ministry though they felt called.
(Taken from: *Pastoral Mentoring Network*, Dr. Paul Johnson, *Vision New England*; quoted at <http://ashland.edu/seminary/slc.html>).

Gene believes that these conditions reveal that the problem is a systemic issue that usually is addressed with symptomatic remedies. As a result, many pastors today are not adequately prepared for the rigors of general pastoral ministry today.

The Sandberg Leadership Center has developed a program called Pastors of Excellence (PoE) that aims to address the challenges that pastors face today by training and mentoring pastors to develop five characteristics of a good and healthy pastor—that is, one who:

- Prioritizes growth in spiritual maturity.
- Prioritizes growth in personal well-being.
- Prioritizes healthy relationships as foundational to ministry.
- Seeks to continually develop skills and competencies in ministry.
- Intentionally leads a congregation toward healthy renewal.

Five assessments are used in the PoE program to help pastors develop a learning plan related to their role as a pastor: Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory, Lifestyle Inventory I & II, Stress Processing Report, and a Spiritual Competency Profile. These tools are administered in various retreat settings along with teaching, reflective conversation, and peer advisement and assessment interviews to help equip the pastor for effective and fruitful ministry.

Being well grounded in an awareness of one's personal and professional competencies is especially crucial for pastors who do ministry in a dysfunctional congregation. Gene remarked, "Unless you are wise, the system will eat you up. Within

two years it will either try to expel you for attempting to change it, or it will try to enculturate you so that you are no longer a threat.”

The only way to effectively transform a culture is by first developing transforming leaders. A pastor equipped with the proper understanding and skills to be a transformational leader will be better able to withstand the pressures and hazards that come from the congregational culture that he is seeking to influence toward renewal.

The PoE program at Ashland Theological Seminary is one example of the kind of personal and professional training available to pastors who are involved in recovery ministry today. Recovery leaders would be wise to invest in a continuing education program to challenge themselves to keep growing as a person and a professional in ministry. My decision to enter the Christian Leadership Program of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary met this need in my life while I was in the middle of my first recovery ministry assignment.

Interview with Dr. Ron Susek (Jan. 9, 2007)

While in the middle of my second recovery church assignment, I read a book by Dr. Ron Susek titled *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflicts*. I had read several books on church conflict management before this one, but I gained a better understanding of how church conflicts ignite and how to diffuse them before they get to the destructive stages. What made this book stand out from the other books on church conflict was his uncompromising stance of exposing and confronting sin as the source of the conflict. Many other approaches to conflict management want to focus on resolving tensions between the parties in conflict rather than deal honestly and humbly before God as to why this conflict has ignited in the first place.

I asked Ron to interview so that I could include his perspective of intervention ministry in troubled churches in this project. Ron told me that since his book was first released in 1999, his ministry has been receiving many calls from churches looking for assistance while embroiled in a church conflict. As a result, the Susek Evangelistic Association started a ministry directed to meeting these needs—FIRM (Firestorm Intervention and Restoration Ministry). The director of FIRM, Dr. Ed Pierce, has extensive training and experience in mediation with parties in conflicts.

Ron believes that “the number one resource that churches are not taking advantage of when going through conflict is seeking independent assistance. Generally they wait until they are way down the road before they call us, which means that we are limited in what we can do for them at that point.”

Ron highly recommends that churches schedule a Total Church Assessment with an organization like theirs every five years. This Total Church Assessment will root out potential problems and give an independent voice to identify the visible problems that can’t be resolved from within the congregation. Ron has found when churches go through this process, they are more open to deal with the issues that could start a firestorm before they become serious problems.

When a church involves their organization in conflict mediation, the number one goal is to slow down the firestorm. This is done by assuring everyone that they will get a fair hearing from an independent person, not from a biased friend. This independent perspective allows the mediator to work fairly with everyone so that the goal is to engage them in the resolution process:

We are empowering them with an authority that they lost through all of those skirmishes, because when there is trouble, the Holy Spirit doesn’t matter to them

any more! An independent voice helps every side feel that they are getting a fair hearing. Then they are willing to work with the process.

Ron believes that an independent organization can also be a more effective use of resources for resolving church conflicts rather than relying only on denominational support:

We strongly encourage denominations to not mediate. We can come into a situation with no vested interest, and we are not biased toward protecting their assets. We represent an outside, neutral authority, much like an umpire on the field. When two players are fighting, the stripes on his referee shirt suggest fairness in resolving this dispute.

An average mediation process will cost a church about \$3000 to \$5000.

However, in light of the long term picture of what is lost when firestorms are allowed to burn out of control, the cost is worth the investment. Ron believes that firestorms don't necessarily require a long term recovery period if they are handled properly and in a professional manner.

The reason that Ron feels so strongly about the importance of mediation to resolve church conflicts relates back to his passion as an evangelist: "The number one casualty of a church conflict is the gospel of Jesus Christ, because when a church gets survival-oriented it cannot be salvation-oriented." Coming in with an independent perspective can help the church redefine, reframe, and reenergize its mission by breaking down suspicions, building bridges, and maintaining integrity in relationships within the congregation.

Ron said that whenever they mediate in a divided congregation, they assure that church that they won't come in to change their doctrine, but to help them resolve their conflict. Commissions are organized within the congregation to study important issues relating to the ministry of the church. These commissions create structures and

boundaries for their different ministries. “When the whole church is involved in this process, their self-respect will sky-rocket. If churches think these things through and put them in print, you are liable to avoid litigation.” Each of the commissions brings its findings to the elders. The elders either approve or revise their reports, and then the commissions teach the whole church what they have learned. In this way the churches are rebuilt from the bottom up.

One of the foundational teachings that Ron believes has been lost in the church today has to do with the nature and exercise of authority:

Authority is the prize of the universe, which is why it is so hotly contested. Authority is the number one issue in church conflicts. All other conflicts extend from this one. The nature of authority is the right to be and the right to act... Churches need to do an in depth study of authority. We tend to see it as manipulative, oppressive, and abusive—not as a servant on his knees bringing healing and guidance to the church.

Ron believes that for churches to get and to stay healthy, they must get serious about spiritual leadership in the church. He said that one of the most damaged areas on the church today is the role and authority of the pastor: “We have weakened this divine gift to the church. The pastor has authority as an endowed gift, but we have lost our respect for that authority.” Ron visualizes the proper function of spiritual leadership in the church through this analogy: “Christ is the brain, the pastor is the heart, and the elders are the arteries to the body.” When churches allow for the proper exercise of spiritual authority in their church leadership, they will be better able to withstand any firestorms that ignite so that the gospel ministry will not be compromised or undermined.

After meeting with Ron Susek, I gained a greater appreciation for the value of independent intervention ministries for churches in conflict. I would encourage recovery leaders not to hesitate to seek help from ministries such as FIRM (Firestorm Intervention

and Restoration Ministry) to provide intervention from trained professionals when encountering further conflicts in the church.

Interview with Mrs. Christy Frain (Feb. 1, 2007)

Another critical dimension that must be addressed in recovery ministry is its impact on the pastor's family. They are not just another family in the congregation. Instead, they are often at the epicenter of the aftershocks from the earthquake event. Most other families in the church don't understand the unique pressures and pain that pastoral families often go through, but especially when the pastor is serving in a wounded or dysfunctional church.

For the past fifteen years that I have been engaged in recovery church ministry, my family has also been intimately involved in this process, sometimes far more than they wanted to be. Christy has been a loyal companion with me on this journey through the thick and thin, the highs and many lows of recovery ministry. While I was engaged in the interview component of my thesis project, Christy asked me if I intended to interview her as well. I admitted that this was not in my original plan, but that her experience and insights would provide a needed "insider" perspective of what a recovery leader's family goes through during the recovery ministry process. I asked her in the interview to share some of the challenges and hazards that ministry families experience when ministering in wounded or dysfunctional churches.

One of the most difficult aspects of this kind of ministry is that the family often comes under attack because they are related to the pastor, who is the focal point of some members' anger or frustration with what is happening in the church. Christy stated this point in this way:

Ministry families often suffer by those who are supposed to be their church family. If it clings to them, this can become the identity of the family. Few others are treated this way at school, at church, and while on sports teams. It gets to the point that there is *no safe place* for the family from critical, condescending, and mean people who are supposed to be church family members.

Another hazard that the ministry family often faces is feeling like they have no power and no voice in the congregation because they are related to the pastor:

If a pastor's wife speaks up, she is wrong for taking up her husband's cause. However, the family is stuck in the church because when they are treated badly, they can't just go to another church. It is also hard for the kids to process. They can't figure out how the church as the Body of Christ can treat them differently from the Lord's perspective.

Ministry in a dysfunctional church often fails to provide the support that the pastor's family needs. In both churches, our girls did not have a healthy youth group experience. In fact, in our present church, their youth group experience was so dysfunctional that it was detrimental to their emotional and spiritual well-being.

Another unique hazard occurs when the pastor becomes wounded in the recovery ministry process. If he is hurting, then his family is without a husband, a father, or a pastor to turn to when things get difficult for them: "If the pastor can't leave it at the door when he comes home, the family is stuck—in a dysfunctional church with a dysfunctional head of household. There is no one to support them, and they can't always lean on friends and family for their needs."

Christy shared her personal pain from last year's trauma in this way:

This whole process has been really painful for me. Congregational members don't understand where I am coming from. I feel alone in my pain. There are unresolved issues with what has happened, and there is no safe place for me. The ministry family just can't leave a bad situation without losing their income, and they can't ever just be themselves. It's hard enough to have safety in a healthy church. In an unhealthy one there is no safety. Over a long time, it takes so much out of you.

So what can be done to protect the ministry family when the pastor is involved in recovery ministry to a wounded or dysfunctional congregation? Christy shared her perspective on two levels. On the denominational level, leaders must be “people who understand church conflict and who will take a stand for the truth. They should check in with the pastor, spouse, and children to see how they are doing, and they need to understand that the amount of conflict will not lessen until they stand for truth.”

At times it can feel like to the ministry family that a denominational priority is to hold on to a functioning church rather than to protect the pastor and his family. “If the denomination’s leaders want to placate people rather than stand for truth, it will allow the dysfunction in the church to continue.”

On the family level, the pastor has to know how and when to protect his family: “The pastor can’t allow the church to dominate. We cannot be willing to sacrifice our family for the church. The family needs to come before the church.”

Christy said that one way that this can be done is by setting a limit on how much you will allow your family to be affected by the dysfunction in the church:

Have a definite time on how long you are willing to sacrifice. When you reach that limit, don’t dream on that it will be different.... I knew a week and a half into this church ministry where this was going. We needed to stop and look at the reality of the situation. If we had set limits on how long we were willing to sacrifice for this church, I would have felt more in control and more protected. Without any limits, the conflict is so draining that it just feels overwhelming.

The demands of recovery ministry can also pull a pastor away from his family’s needs and suffering. It may seem like the pastor does not value his family when he gets immersed in the congregation’s struggles and conflicts: “A pastor has to stay honest with his family or he compounds the suffering in his family. Communication and support for each other is paramount. Don’t isolate from each other.”

I realize that I did not do a good job of protecting our family when going through these crises. At times Christy had to carry the family needs alone because I was caught up in all of the conflict. She said that it would be easier to do this kind of ministry when your children are grown.

Is it worth the cost to bring a family into a recovery church situation? That still remains to be seen. I asked her is there any benefit getting involved in this kind of ministry? Christy answered,

If you can learn to see God's hand at work to resolve the conflict. The pastor and spouse need to continually see God at work and show their children. Children who grow up with an honest view of the Body of Christ and a realistic view of God at work have the best chance to become mature, active Christians. Families who see God through the conflict are stronger in the long run.

Congregational Responses to the Recovery Process

In November 2006, I distributed congregational surveys to members of our congregation for my thesis research project. I requested that those who had been through an earthquake experience in our church to fill out a survey and return it to me by the end of December. I was disappointed that I only received seventeen completed surveys. However, the most useful survey insights came from written answers to these questions: Did this experience influence or change your view of the church or your view of God? What was the outcome of your experience, and what did you learn from it? Here are some of the written survey answers submitted by members of Immanuel Evangelical Free Church:

I learned once again that life goes on if you get back on the horse and follow the Word, because God is in control (Gary Harding).

My view of God did not change. I knew He had a purpose and a plan. I clung to His promises and vowed to do what He asked of me for the health of IEFC. But prayer was in a 'why' and anguish mode at first (Lori Leckrone).

The experience taught me that I cannot become complacent when it comes to the direction of that my church is taking. If I have a feeling that something doesn't seem right, I should act upon it to a reasonable degree and within the boundaries of my authority.... It made me keenly aware that it is dangerous to put someone on a pedestal. Many people put the pastor there. Then, when he sinned, it was difficult for them to be objective about the sin. They thought he thought he could go through a 12 week program and come back as pastor.... There was a power struggle to try to get the one who fell into sin to take over again. This is what exacerbated our problem (Tom Leckrone).

God is in control. Amen!! If He wants a church to survive and (or) grow, it will... My faith and trust are in the Lord alone (Liz Schnetzka).

The church still has issues that come up. Many people left. I guess I learned to wait things out to see what happens before deciding what to do (Valerie Miller).

God exposed this sin in our church. He did it because He loves this church.... I grew spiritually and developed a deeper relationship with my Great God (Teri Schroll).

The church suffered because nobody could forgive. Neither side wanted to talk about the root issue—'sin.' A power struggle developed, and both sides were unwilling to reconcile... My view of the church hasn't changed. We have persevered through all of this and maintained the focus that worship is our high priority (Jere Fuhrman).

With each division or interruption in the church's forward progress, we've become more convinced that the church is about God and ministry, not about people who run the church. God is still God. He is still on the throne, no matter how we humans get in His way. We still struggle with waiting on God to see where He wants to take us every time there is a falling out in the body.... We have learned that no church is perfect. A church body must be a family—keep commitment to God and each other through the good and bad times. Communication is *essential* between membership and leadership. Keep the focus on Christ—not on people or money (Tom & Amy Clark).

Summary of Chapter Four Interviews

The insights that I gained from these personal interviews underscore the reality that anyone desiring to serve in a recovery ministry should first prepare an intentional ministry plan and organize a recovery support team *before* serving in a wounded congregation.

I have learned during my pastoral ministry experience in two wounded congregations that the recovery process does not follow an orderly or a linear time frame. Having an established ministry plan with some necessary strategies to implement will help keep a recovery leader from both distractions and discouragement when faced with both aftershocks and setbacks in the recovery ministry.

If I had the opportunity to start over again after what I now know from my research and ministry experience, I would not attempt to take on a recovery ministry assignment without recruiting a team of support people for my family and my ministry. Pastoral ministry in itself is a demanding vocation. The pressures, challenges, and stress levels are magnified upon the pastoral leader when serving in a wounded congregation.

It is crucial to have available a team of resource people who will assist, support, and uphold the pastor and his family when they enter the earthquake zone of a wounded congregation. One person cannot expect to handle all of the challenges and responsibilities in a wounded congregation by himself. When I felt like I was struggling to get a handle on the personal and ministry challenges I was facing, I sought out a trusted mentor and a pastoral counselor to help me through the issues that seemed beyond my abilities and experience. Unfortunately I waited until I reached the latter stages of my present ministry situation before looking for help from our Eastern District Association Staff.

I would encourage anyone considering this kind of ministry not to wait until they face a personal or ministry crisis to develop this kind of support network. The time invested in setting up this strategy and resource team members will be worth it when one is immersed in the ministry challenges of leading between the fault lines.

Chapter Five: Outcomes and Recommendations

While mailing chapter three to my thesis advisor at the post office, the postal worker asked me, “Is there anything potentially hazardous in this package?” I responded, “I certainly hope not, because this is my doctoral thesis!” “Wow,” he replied, “How long did it take you to write it?” My answer: “Fifteen years.”

This thesis project is the culmination of living through and learning about recovery ministry over the past fifteen years. Though the content of this thesis isn’t potentially hazardous, the leadership experience was at times. On more than one occasion, Christy asked me, “Can’t you find another line of work that is less hazardous to our family?”

Recovery ministry in wounded congregations is a costly undertaking for those who desire to serve God in this unique ministry. When someone asked me how I managed to survive through all the turmoil and aftershocks in ministry to wounded congregations, I responded, “There is a fine line between perseverance and stupidity, and often I don’t know which side of the line that I am on.”

However, I have not approached this calling with a naïve idea of what I was doing. I can still vividly remember walking across the West Chester University campus in 1980 when I first sensed God’s call for me to go into the ministry. My response to the Lord that day was something like this, “All right, Lord. I’m willing to become a pastor, but I don’t want to just go into a congregation to keep a church’s machinery running. I want to be a change agent for your kingdom.” Looking back now, I can see that my initial call to ministry is what kept me steadfast through all of these years in these two wounded congregations.

I. Limitations of this thesis project

I have realized that there are limitations to the research aspect of this thesis project. This study is not based on any scientific research, but upon anecdotal observations from my personal experience and from personal interviews with others that have been involved in a variety of dimensions of recovery ministry. Some of those whom I had interviewed gave me referrals of others who may have enhanced my research and conclusions had I been able to interview them as well. Unfortunately, personal and ministry time constraints became a deciding factor that prevented me from pursuing these leads to conduct more interviews.

However, I do believe that this project provides an introductory study that will inform and aid anyone involved with ministry to wounded congregations. Recovery ministry requires an entirely different set of skills than traditional pastoral ministry to “lead between the fault lines.” The observations that follow in this chapter are my personal insights, general conclusions, and recommendations for developing a recovery ministry strategy in wounded congregations.

II. The costly impact of an “earthquake” event in a congregation

When a church goes through the trauma of an “earthquake experience,” the impact can create a crippling impact upon the congregation and the church leaders. Not only is there a sudden drop in attendance and financial giving, the congregation also must deal with the unsettled emotions of betrayal, loss, anger, and anxiety.

Before I became the interim pastor of the East Dennis congregation, the weekly attendance average had dropped from around 150 to 90 following the church split. Over

time, recurring aftershocks and fracturing pared down the congregation size to around 50 before rebounding to its present worship service average of around 100.

The average worship attendance at the Immanuel Evangelical Free Church was 234 before the senior pastor's resignation in August 2000. By the end of the year, the worship attendance average dropped to 175. After the church split following the annual congregational meeting in January 2001, the attendance average lowered to around 124. After I began my ministry as the senior pastor, further aftershocks and fractures lowered the average attendance down into the 60s before rebounding near 120 before the Elder Board exodus last year. Our attendance dropped once again into the 60s before rebounding to the 80s at this present time. I do believe that had we been able to resolve some of these underlying conflicts and personal agendas that undermined our recovery, our congregation size would be well over 200 today. Only about one third of the members who were here when I began my ministry have withstood the aftershocks and remained in this congregation. When others have come into our fellowship without the experience or awareness of our past conflicts, it is difficult for them to understand the depth of the trauma that this remnant went through in this recovery process.

At the same time, our church leadership team was greatly affected by the turmoil caused by these aftershocks. Ten of the thirteen Elders who served in this congregation during the past five years have left the church before completing their term of service. The stress and trauma incurred in a chronically anxious congregation precipitated their premature departures due to burnout, discouragement, or unresolved personal conflicts within the congregation. The Elder Board took a lot of heat from angry members who felt betrayed and deceived by the senior pastor. A feeling of mistrust developed between

the congregation and the Elder Board that created additional stress upon the leadership team while trying to resolve the instability generated by the loss of members and income.

III. Recovery ministry and long term vision

My point for elaborating about these congregational histories is this: *Effective recovery ministry requires a long term vision and plan.* This is not a ministry for those who expect to see rapid change and growth. At times it can become very discouraging for the recovery leader to see people leave from the adverse impact of chronic anxiety, unresolved conflicts, discouragement, and weariness present in a wounded congregation. Tangible evidence of a turnaround may not be realized for a few years due to the damage inflicted upon the emotional and relational systems of the congregation. Ministry advances that have been gained through hard work and perseverance may easily be lost if another aftershock hits the congregation while still in a weakened condition.

For this long term process to reach the turnaround point, the recovery leader is that he must be willing to stay the course long enough to bring about transformation from within the traumatized system. This long term perspective can be especially difficult to maintain because our American leadership culture places a high value on success determined by the size and growth of congregations and budgets. A recovery leader must decide that his understanding of success is derived from the biblical values of faithfulness and obedience to God's call regardless of the lack of visible evidence that change is taking place in the early stages of the recovery process. I learned during my recovery ministry experience that it may actually seem as if the ministry situation is getting worse at first before it will show indications that the church is getting better.

I would encourage those interested in recovery ministry plan to study some of the resources that I have reviewed in this thesis project. Become especially familiar with family systems theory and the impact that trauma has upon wounded congregations. When a congregation becomes a chronically anxious emotional system, there are often interpersonal conflicts that must also be addressed and resolved. Learn how to identify the signs and the stages of a firestorm. Train your leadership team how to recognize these symptoms and how to intervene to stop these conflicts before they build in intensity and lead to destructive consequences in the congregation.

Consider holding a *Setting Your Church Free* prayer service to lead the entire congregation to repent of unconfessed corporate sins that may have been overlooked, to forgive those who had caused the initial pain and trauma, and to rededicate themselves to serve and follow Jesus Christ as the Head of the church. It is important that the entire leadership team should be in agreement with this plan before holding this service, so that the leadership team presents a unified front in support of this practice.

Finally, the recovery leader should also design a personal development plan to grow as a leader during this ministry experience. The books that I read by Robert Quinn, Robert Clinton, Reggie McNeal, and Brian Dodd were especially helpful for stretching my understanding of the process in which God shapes the character, conduct, and competence of a leader. The bibliography covers these works and others that proved insightful while I was involved in recovery ministry.

IV. The Apostle Paul's model for a recovery leader

The longer that I have been involved in pastoral ministry, the greater appreciation I have for the Apostle Paul's leadership example revealed in his epistles. The leadership

secret of Paul's success was not based upon his application of certain leadership techniques or strategies for planting and growing churches. His focal point was to remain Christ-centered regardless of whatever leadership challenge he faced: "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:20-21).

Anyone involved in recovery ministry would do well to do a careful reading of Paul's letters to learn from his leadership example as one whose life agenda was to lead as a follower of Christ: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Paul demonstrated leadership values often overlooked by many of today's leadership gurus, such as submission, suffering, humility, prayer, and teamwork. His overriding concern was the advance of the gospel, not the size of his ministry. Therefore, he was willing to take on difficult ministry tasks that many contemporary leaders would seek to avoid.

Paul was willing to pay the price necessary to represent Christ to the world. His high threshold for pain allowed him to patiently endure with the conflicts and controversies that developed in the churches that he planted. Brian Dodd states that "Rather than having it all together, faithful leaders have learned that true power and ministry flow from a complete awareness of God's power rather than the leader's perfection or polish" (Dodd, 74). When it gets hard for the recovery leader to serve a contentious congregation, Paul's model in Second Corinthians provides the wisdom and support for how to maintain one's focus on what matters most, for God's power is perfected in our weakness when we rely upon him. As Paul said, "Therefore I will boast

all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

V. A recovery leader's need for a support team

Another area that is essential for recovery ministry is to have a good support team in place for the recovery leader, his family, and the congregation. It is neither healthy nor wise to expect that one person can be responsible to carry the tremendous ministry load that a wounded congregation requires. Even the Apostle Paul needed companions with him as he traveled through the Mediterranean world to spread the gospel. His letters are filled with names of his traveling companions and co-laborers in the gospel ministry, such as Barnabas, Silas, Luke, Titus, Aquila and Priscilla, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and John Mark.

A recovery leader needs an experienced *mentor* who can coach him through the challenges he faces during the recovery process. Recovery ministry can be so demanding that a leader may get overwhelmed with meeting needs and resolving problems in the church. Regular meetings with a mentor can help the recovery leader with maintaining balance in ministry from a trusted outside observer.

A recovery leader also needs a *pastoral counselor* who will monitor both his and his family's health and well-being while engaged in this demanding ministry. A recovery leader and his family often become lightning rods or magnets for the wounded congregation members' anger and hostility. A pastoral counselor can help them to maintain their personal boundaries for their protection from the harmful reactions that

sometimes are directed at them. This person can also guide them to prepare an exit strategy for when it is best to leave before the ministry becomes hazardous to the family.

Another key component of this recovery team is that the recovery leader has a *peer group* for mutual encouragement and support. These networks of relationships can have a strengthening and stabilizing effect upon the pastor when facing difficult challenges in the congregation.

During our ministry time on Cape Cod, Christy and I were members of a ministry couples group that met monthly for over eleven years. Each month a different couple would host a meal and the rest would bring something to share with the main course. Our evening would consist of sharing what was happening in our families and churches, and concluding with a time of corporate prayer. During those years, whenever one family went through a personal or ministry crisis, the rest of us would be there to support the family through the ordeal. Though we came from different denominational backgrounds, our common experience with Christ and our unique experience as ministry families established a strong relational bond that continues to this day even though some of us have relocated to other parts of the country.

Another important part for the recovery team strategy is to have in place an *outside intervention team* that will carry some of the conflict resolution and pastoral counseling responsibilities prevalent in a wounded congregation. It is difficult for a recovery leader to handle alone all of the congregational concerns, especially when the church is a chronically anxious system. Having a team of resource people that are gifted and trained in conflict resolution, grief counseling, and other essential intervention skills will better allow the on site recovery leader stay focused where he is needed most.

Another value of using an outside intervention team approach is that they may sometimes be better able to resolve the conflict situations in a wounded congregation than a recovery leader who is caught in the middle of the turmoil.

VI. Conclusion

Ministry to wounded congregations may not be a very high profile kind of ministry. It is often very demanding and painful to go through. A recovery leader may not witness the fruit of his labors during of his years of service to the wounded congregation. However, there is great satisfaction to know that you have made a difference in the lives of a church family who were traumatized by an “earthquake experience,” but have now recovered their hope and enthusiasm for their future ministry.

While interviewing Dave MacKenzie for this project, he told me he once heard that most pastors can only handle one turnaround church in their lifetimes. This is because of the toll it takes on the pastor and his family’s health, stamina, and emotional well-being. Over the past fifteen years, I have had the opportunity to be involved in two recovery ministry assignments. Though I made many mistakes along the way, God has been gracious to protect and provide for our family while going through some tough times in these congregations.

It is my hope that this thesis project may benefit future recovery leaders and also associations to develop effective recovery ministry strategies that will bring wounded churches back to health and vitality for the cause of Christ.

Appendix A- “Setting Your Church Free” Prayer Service

I. Welcome & Overview

We come together today with many thoughts and emotions. Dealing with past hurts and sins is never comfortable, but like a wound that must be cleansed before healing, we need to deal with the source of the infection before healing can occur.

The process and prayers that we will be using today are adapted from *Setting Your Church Free* by Neil Anderson and Charles Mylander. These prayers are based on the truths revealed in God’s Word.

II. Opening Worship & Prayer

Let’s start by getting our focus upward on the Lord. READ **Psalm 90**.

Worship song: *Spirit of the Living God*

Pray for *protection* from harm, evil, deception, and distractions through the blood of Christ and the authority of his name.

III. Dealing with Past Memories

Not all that happened in the past is bad. Often when we’ve been through a painful experience, we try either to *block out* or *avoid* everything that happened, both the good and the bad. Our church’s history began exactly 22 years ago today—January 11, 2003! There has been much good that has happened in the past in the life and ministry of IEFC. We want to acknowledge this today so that we can praise God for his goodness and faithfulness.

A. Sharing good memories- Reasons to praise & thank God

1. When Jesus spoke to the seven churches in **Revelation 2-3**, he started by *commending* them for what they had done well before pointing out where they had fallen short of his standards. So we will begin by sharing *good memories* of what we appreciated about the past so that we can thank God for the reasons we have to praise him.

2. Conclude with a prayer of thanks to the Lord for the good memories of the past.

B. Sharing painful memories

Guidelines: *Criticizing* or *blaming* others doesn’t accomplish God’s purposes or make us more like Jesus. Be honest about what is a painful memory for you, but don’t go into *unnecessary elaboration* or make *disparaging remarks* about a person.

1. Sharing of painful memories- *What memories are especially painful to you about what has happened in this congregation?*

2. Personal list those who have hurt you- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the people who have wounded you through their attitudes and actions. Some may no longer be part of this congregation; some may still be here. We can't change the past, but we can free ourselves from it by facing it, forgiving and seeking forgiveness from those whom we have offended.

- Extending forgiveness to another doesn't *minimize* what has happened to us or *absolve* the offender of the wrongdoing. However, this is necessary to practice so that the root of *bitterness* does not infect our souls. (See **HEB 12:15**)
- When we refuse to forgive, *resentment* can grow in our hearts. The literal meaning of this word is to "feel again"—we rehearse the offense and feel the pain again. We can become emotionally and spiritually imprisoned when someone sins against us if we do not deal with it properly according to God's ways.
- **Illus.** Joseph with his brothers (See **GEN 45:4-8**)
- **Illus.** Our experience at Faith Baptist: We rehearsed our story for several months before Christy said that we had to stop and let go of our identity as victims. Victims stay trapped in resentment and emotional pain.

3. Biblical passages on forgiveness- God takes the matter of forgiveness very seriously. Listen to these Scriptures:

MT 6:12-15 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. ' For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

LK 6:27-28 "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

EPH 4:25-32 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin" : Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

4. Recite prayer of forgiveness in unison

Prayer of Corporate Forgiveness:

Dear Heavenly Father. We forgive each and every person who has hurt us or our ministry. We forgive as the Lord forgave us.

We release our resentments and regrets into your hands. You alone can heal our broken hearts and bind up our wounds. We ask you to heal the pain in our hearts and in the corporate memory of our ministry. We have allowed a root of bitterness to spring up and defile many. We also confess the times we did not seek to resolve these painful memories according to your Word. Thank you for your forgiveness.

We commit ourselves to think of these memories, whenever we may happen to recall them, from the vantage point of our union with Christ. We recall Your forgiveness and healing.

May your grace and mercy guide us as we seek to live out our calling as your redeemed people. We ask you, Heavenly Father, to fill us with Your Holy Spirit. We surrender full control of our congregation to our crucified, risen, and reigning Head.

We ask you to bring healing to those who have hurt us. Also bring healing to those who may have been hurt by us. Bless those who curse us and give rich and satisfying ministries to all who belong to you but have gone away from us. We bless them in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who taught us to “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

According to your Word, we pray for those who have hurt us and we forgive them, release them, and bless them. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

IV. Dealing with Corporate Sins

Most Evangelical churches don’t have an adequate understanding of a corporate theology of sin today. Here is Neil Anderson’s definition of corporate sin:

By corporate sins we mean patterns of behavior in a church that are displeasing to God and contrary to His revealed will. They do not differ from individual sins in nature. Sin is still sin whether practiced by an individual or a group. What sets corporate sins apart from individual sins is their being held in common by the whole church or by a significant group within it. This pattern of sinfulness within the group life of the church calls for corporate action on the part of its leaders in order to deal with it. (*Setting Your Church Free*, p. 212)

Biblical examples:

- The Lord designed the Day of Atonement specifically for the corporate sins of Israel (See **LEV 16**)
- Prayers of confession for corporate sin: Daniel (**DAN 9:4-19**); Nehemiah (**NEH 1:5-7**); Ezra (**NEH 9:1-37**)
- The seven churches in **REV 2-3**.

1. Sharing of corporate sins- *What actions or patterns of behavior have been tolerated or committed by our congregation?* Guideline: It is off limits to confess someone else's sins! We are discussing sins of commission and omission that apply to the whole body.

2. Prayer of confession

Prayer of Confession:

Heavenly Father,

We acknowledge that these corporate sins are unacceptable to you. We renounce every use of our corporate body as an instrument of unrighteousness by ourselves and by those who have gone before us. We reject and disown all the sins of our ancestors. We cancel all advantages, schemes and other works of the devil that have been passed on to our ministry from them.

By the authority of Christ, the Head of His body, the Church, we demolish every Satanic foothold and stronghold in our ministry gained because of our own corporate sins. We retake all ground given to the adversary in our ministry, in our related organizations, and in our life together as co-laborers in this ministry. We release control of that territory to the Holy Spirit.

We invite the Holy Spirit to cleanse us, renew us, fill us, and lead us into all truth. Cause us to obey Your truth so that our congregation will be free to serve You.

We submit ourselves and our ministry to the sovereignty and ownership of the Heavenly Father, the Lordship and fullness of Christ, and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. By Your grace and according to Your Word, we acknowledge that we are fellow citizens with the saints and we belong to God's household. We affirm that the Church has been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the Chief Cornerstone. We praise our Lord Jesus Christ for his Headship of our church and see ourselves as His Body, Bride, and Building.

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." (Eph. 3:20, 21)

V. Closing Access points to the Enemy's Attacks (Christy)

How do we keep from falling into the same patterns of attitudes and behavior, so that we are vulnerable to the enemy's attacks? Christy is going to share from our experience at our previous church in East Dennis and apply this to where we go from here as we look to our future.

Closing access points

In some ways you may wonder why I would speak into today's events. For me I feel as though I have been affected, also. Since I have been treated differently than I think I would have if none of the hurtful past events took place.

Closing access points can sound like pop psychology - a simple definition for it is just leaving behind old habit patterns and choosing to live differently. We're discussing it here because we've done the hard work of putting the past to rest. Now we want to make sure we don't invite the negative results of the past back into our lives.

The effects of the past can be released through prayer - God's healing touch in our lives, but they can be revisited through old habits. For someone making a dramatic lifestyle change there usually have to be dramatic adjustments in the way they behave. For example: someone with an alcohol problem may need to make all new friends to stay away from the temptation to drink. Individuals who were traumatized as children often have behaviors in their lives that helped them survive as children, but hold them back as adults. Behaviors like hiding emotions, not trusting others or trying to save everyone around them.

These are extreme examples, but I think they show what I'm trying to explain more clearly.

For us today it's more about recognizing behaviors that developed through some of the unhealthy parts of the past that need to be put to rest, also. Only God knows what that would be for you.

For some that maybe a lack of trust in the leadership... E. Dennis story. (When we first went to our previous church we were continually confronted with the trauma of a previous pastor's behavior. The sad part is that the events had happened 25 years before that. As a leadership - Kev and I and the elders and their wives committed to hearing everyone out who carried the burden of the past pain and then asking forgiveness in the name of the church. None of us had been adults 25 years earlier, but we needed to be released from these individual's condemnation. We, also, needed to stand as the leadership of the church and carry the responsibility for what had happened.)

Kev and I weren't here when this church went through this painful experience, but it has effected how some people treat us.

Maybe your issue is a critical spirit - criticism pushes people and situations away and protects you from feeling all that is going on around you.

Maybe it's hiding your emotions - maybe it wasn't safe to be honest at that time and some of you are caught in that way.

Maybe it's the expression of gossip and slander- maybe you needed to discuss and ask questions throughout that time and you looked to certain people to talk to - now you're tempted to talk to someone else about an issue than the person you have the issue with.

Maybe you learned to only relate to certain people and to block out or protect yourself from others you didn't know; too many difficult conversations could develop if you opened up to individuals who might see things differently than you did.

I guess what I want you to hear from me is this: what might have been appropriate behavior during a traumatic situation is no longer appropriate when the traumatic situation is gone. I believe the enemy will try to get us into old behavior patterns as a way to take us into old behavior. His desire is to limit us and control us by keeping us in pain and if we deal with the pain then he is content to hold us in old habitual sins.

As a church we need to be aware of how we are responding because a church never stays still - it is alive. It is always changing in some way. For us as a church to be a safe place for everyone we need to move on from the past in our spiritual life and our thought life and our behaviors. When you close access points you choose to change your own behavior so that you aren't tempted to return to old responses. I would ask each of you to spend some time quietly with the Lord. Let Him show you if there are behaviors that you need to turn from as we move on as a church.

Prayer for Protection from the Enemy:

Heavenly Father,
Thank You that our Lord Jesus Christ disarmed the evil powers and authorities at the cross and in the resurrection and glorification. You made a public spectacle of them. (Col. 2:15) Guide us in enforcing Your victory.
Lead us to remove the "high places" that the enemy gains in our lives through our personal and corporate disobedience, deception and disillusionment. Reveal to us our corporate sins that we may renounce, repent, and reject them. Flood us with biblical truths that replace them. Forgive our lack of faith and trust in You.
Forgive our lack of time in prayer. Forgive our disbelief in Your present, active power in response to prayer. Cleanse us from complacency and lukewarmness.

Cleanse us of our unwillingness to forgive one another. Forgive our withholding sacrificial love and giving only what costs us nothing. We now forgive one another from our hearts for the times we have neglected, betrayed, retreated, hurt, damaged, misunderstood, deceived, or lied to one another. Heal the pain left by attacks of Satan—the damage caused—on our church and our leaders. Open our eyes to see any of the adversary’s strongholds, and cause us to use the sword of the Spirit to stand against them in His power. Weaken whatever positions the enemy may have left. Release Your angels to accomplish for us and for our church everything You send them to do. Remove the enemy’s interference so that your angels can minister to our church and our people unhindered. Fill us afresh and anew with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Lead us to live in Him, walk with Him, keep in step with Him. As Head of our church, Lord Jesus Christ, direct us, guide us, protect us. As bridegroom of Your bride, purify us, nourish us and satisfy us. As architect and builder, design us, build us, develop us. As author and finisher of the faith, teach us, instruct us and disciple us. Make us the beautiful church in Your sight that You intend us to be. Stimulate us to respond to You with genuine faith, hope, love, obedience and holy living. In the precious and powerful name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Leadership Declaration: (by the Elder Board)

As shepherds of God’s flock that is under our care, we stand our ground as overseers and examples (1 Pet. 5:1-4). We offer ourselves and our bodies to God as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to Him, which is our spiritual worship (Rom. 12:1,2). As servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God, we fulfill the requirement entrusted to us so that we may prove faithful (1 Cor. 4:1,2). We submit our ministries, our programs, our classes and groups, our activities, our facilities and all our members and attenders to God. In full union with our Lord Jesus Christ, including His protection and power, we now command Satan and all evil powers targeting our church to leave us and everything under our care. In the name and authority of Christ, we remove any advantage the adversary has gained. We forbid the evil one or his henchmen from attacking us. We accept only what is our Heavenly Father’s will to accomplish His sovereign purposes. We declare that Satan and his forces are defeated through the death, resurrection, and present reign of Christ at the right hand of the Father. We claim the promise of Jesus when He said, “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” (Matt. 16:18).

VI. Re-dedicating Congregation and Facilities to the Lord

The final step that we want to follow today is to rededicate our congregation and facilities to the Lord. First we will recite a corporate prayer of rededication, and then I

would like us to go into the different rooms of our church building to pray for cleansing and blessing upon all who enter and serve the congregation in those rooms.

1. Re-dedication prayer for leaders, staff, teachers, etc.

Prayer of Rededication:

Dear Heavenly Father, We worship You and You alone. You are the Lord of our lives and the Lord of our church. We offer our bodies to You as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. We also present our church body to You as a sacrifice of praise.

We pray for protection of our pastor, staff, leaders, teachers, members, families, attenders, and all of our ministries. Grant us wisdom and grace to deal with heretics and spiritual wolves. We pray for discernment in order to judge between good and evil.

We dedicate all of our facilities to You, and all the property that You have entrusted to us, including our sound system, audiovisual equipment, kitchen, and transportation. We rededicate our sanctuary, classrooms, offices and every part of our facility and property.

Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Head of this church, and we exalt You. May all that we do bring honor and glory to You. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

2. Prayer through rooms in church building (for cleansing and blessing)

VII. Future Concerns to Follow Up

Are there any other areas of concern that we must address from the past or in looking to the future?

VIII. Closing Worship and Prayer

Worship song: *In My Life, Lord, Be Glorified*

Closing Prayer of Thanksgiving and Sealing the work that was done in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Appendix B- Recovery Ministry Preaching and Teaching Themes

During the span of my pastoral ministry in wounded congregations, I have preached and taught through several series to help restore a God-centered view of the church and to recover the congregation's identity and mission. Here is a summary of selected themes and series that I developed for my preaching and teaching ministry.

A. *“God’s Standard for a Successful Church”*

This series challenges the popular views of success to look at how God views the church. God's standard for determining a successful church is not based upon size but spiritual maturity that demonstrates the qualities of faith, hope, and love in our relationships with God and one another.

- *“God’s Standard for a Successful Church”* 1 COR 1:1-9; COL 1:3-6
- *“Evidence of Spiritual Maturity: A Fervent Faith”* 1 TH 1:1-10
- *“Evidence of Spiritual Maturity: A Steadfast Hope”* 2 COR 1:1-11
- *“Evidence of Spiritual Maturity: A Loyal Love”* 1 JN 3:11-18; 4:7-12

B. *“We are God’s Church: Seeing Our Church from God’s Perspective”*

This series focuses upon the identity of the church from God's perspective. The biblical metaphors of the church are explained and applied in light of the local church. I wrote an affirmation of faith for this series that was used as a congregational response before each message in this series. It is included in Appendix C.

- *“Whose Church is This?”* MT 16:13-19; 18:15-20
- *“Recovering Our Identity as God’s Church”* 1 PET 2:9-12
- *“Getting Ready for the Wedding”* EPH 5:25-30
- *“Recovering Our Inheritance as God’s Family”* 1 JN 3:1-3
- *“The Shape of Body’s Body”* 1 COR 12:12-27
- *“Living Stones in God’s Temple”* 1 PET 2:4-6

C. *“Becoming a One Another Church”*

This series covers the basic one another commands for congregational life in the New Testament as God’s vision for his church.

- *“Becoming a One Another Church”* ROM 12:1-21
- *“Loving One Another”* JN 13:34-35
- *“Accepting One Another”* ROM 15:7
- *“Encouraging One Another”* HEB 10:22-25
- *“Serving One Another”* JN 13:1-17
- *“Forgiving One Another”* EPH 4:32; COL 3:13
- *“Praying for One Another”* EPH 6:18; JAS 5:16
- *“Living in Harmony with One Another”* ROM 12:16; 1 PET 3:8

D. *“Nehemiah: God’s Plan for Building God’s People”*

This series looks at how God uses the rebuilding project of Jerusalem’s walls as a model for rebuilding a God’s centered ministry in his church.

- *“Prayer that Touches Heaven”* NEH 1
- *“Laying the Foundation for Rebuilding”* NEH 2
- *“Everybody on the Wall!”* NEH 3
- *“Dealing with Dragons”* NEH 4
- *“Maintaining Harmony in God’s Family”* NEH 5
- *“Keeping God’s Building Program on Schedule”* NEH 6-7
- *“Reorganizing for Renewal”* NEH 8
- *“Getting Honest with God”* NEH 9
- *“Making Vows to the Lord”* NEH 10
- *“Wall to Wall Celebration”* NEH 11
- *“Keeping the Flame of Renewal Burning”* NEH 12

E. Exodus: *“Becoming a People of Destiny”*

This series looks at how God shaped Moses to become a person of destiny and how God uses these same lessons to shape his church to become people of destiny.

- *“Becoming a People of Destiny”* ACTS 7:20-36; HEB 11:23-29
- *“Looking for Signs of God’s Activity”* EX 1:1-2:10

- *“God’s Curriculum for Shaping a Destiny”* EX 2:11-25
- *“A Face to Face Encounter with Destiny”* EX 3
- *“Overcoming Inertia”* EX 4
- *“Overcoming Opposition”* EX 5-6
- *“Witnessing the Greatness of God’s Power”* EX 7-11
- *“Freedom!”* EX 12-13
- *“Deliverance!”* EX 14-15

F. Ephesians: *“Living Out God’s Glorious Plan for His Church”*

This series explains God’s view of the church as His divine creation and how we are to live out that identity as his church.

- *“God’s Glorious Plan for His Church”* EPH 1:1-14
- *“Tapping into God’s Divine Riches Through Prayer”* EPH 1:15-23
- *“Encountering God’s Amazing Grace”* EPH 2:1-10
- *“Encountering God’s New Community”* EPH 2:11-22
- *“Deciphering the Mystery of God’s Church”* EPH 3:1-13
- *“Praying for God’s Fullness in His Church”* EPH 3:14-21
- *“God’s Plan for Unity in His Church”* EPH 4:1-6
- *“God’s Plan for Maturity in His Church”* EPH 4:7-16
- *“Shining God’s Light in Today’s World”* EPH 4:17- 5:14
- *“Living as a Community of the Spirit”* EPH 5:15-21
- *“God’s Plan for the Christian Family”* EPH 5:22- 6:9
- *“Standing Firm in the Battle”* EPH 6:10-20

G. Acts: *“God’s People on the Spirit’s Mission”*

This series views Acts as a training manual for missional congregations.

- *“What on Earth is the Church to be Doing?”* AC 1:1-11
- *“Prepared for Lift-off”* AC 1:12-26
- *“Wind & Fire: Receiving the Father’s Promise”* AC 2:1-21
- *“Reaping in the Harvest Field”* AC 2:22-41
- *“The Anatomy of a Missional Church”* AC 2:42-47
- *“Doing Ministry in the Name of Jesus”* AC 3
- *“Praying on the Frontlines of the Battlefield”* AC 4
- *“Living in the Presence of the King”* AC 5
- *“Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing”* AC 6:1-7
- *“Stephen: A Life That Counts”* AC 6:8- 8:4
- *“Phillip: A Life That Blesses”* AC 8:1-40
- *“Paul: The Great Transformation”* AC 9:1-31

- *“Following the Master’s Example”* AC 32-43
- *“Following the Spirit into Uncharted Territory”* AC 10:1-11:18
- *“From a Mission Church to a Missionary Church”* AC 11:19-30

H. 1 Peter: “Ambassadors of a Living Hope”

This series focuses on living from a missional perspective as ambassadors of our living hope in Christ.

- *“Ambassadors of a Living Hope”* 1 PET 1:1-12
- *“Radiating Hope Through Holiness”* 1 PET 1:13- 2:3
- *“Radiating Hope Through Our Worship and Witness”* 1 PET 2:4-10
- *“Radiating Hope by Living an Exemplary Life”* 1 PET 2:11-25
- *“Radiating Hope in the Home”* 1 PET 3:1-7
- *“Radiating Hope When Life is Not Fair”* 1 PET 3:8-22
- *“Radiating Hope by Becoming Like Jesus”* 1 PET 4:1-11
- *“Radiating Hope When Suffering for Christ”* 1 PET 4:12-19
- *“Radiating Hope When Leading with Humility”* 1 PET 5:1-7
- *“Radiating Hope When Engaging the Enemy”* 1 PET 5:8-11

I. Revelation 1-3: “What the Spirit is Saying to the Churches”

This teaching series looks at Christ’s messages to the seven churches in Revelation and examines them in light of our congregation today.

- *“Christ’s Presence Among His Churches”* REV 1:1-20
- *Christ’s Letter to Ephesus: Love”* REV 2:1-7
- *Christ’s Letter to Smyrna: Perseverance”* REV 2:8-11
- *Christ’s Letter to Pergamum: Truth”* REV 2:12-17
- *Christ’s Letter to Thyatira: Holiness”* REV 2:18-29
- *Christ’s Letter to Sardis: Vitality”* REV 3:1-6
- *Christ’s Letter to Philadelphia: Mission”* REV 3:7-13
- *Christ’s Letter to Ephesus: Love”* REV 3:14-22

J. “Extreme Makeover: Church Edition”

This teaching series on church renewal concentrates on subjects relating to the nature and organization of the church, including leadership qualifications and functions.

- *“Understanding the Life Cycle of a Church”*
- *“Practical Steps for an Extreme Makeover in the Church”*
- *“Ten Signs of Positive Self-Esteem in the Church”*
- *“Breaking Free from Bad Habits”*
- *“Breaking the Cycle of Conflict and Disunity in the Church”*
- *“Who Runs the Church?”*
- *“Who Qualifies to be a Church Leader?”*
- *“What Do Church Leaders Do?”*
- *“What Letter Would Jesus Write to Our Church?”*
- *“What Would Jesus Pray for Our Church?”*

K. 1 Corinthians: *“Dealing with Life in the Local Church”*

This teaching series concentrates on the practical issues of living out a Christ-centered lifestyle in the church.

- *“Finding the Perfect Church”* 1:1-9
- *“Dealing with Divisions in the Church”* 1:10-17
- *“Getting the Gospel Back on Track* 1:18- 3:4
- *“Getting the Ministry Back on Track”* 3:5- 4:21
- *“Dealing with Disorder in the Church”* 5:1- 6:20
- *“Counsel Concerning Sex and Marriage”* 7:1-40
- *“Counsel Concerning Christian Freedom”* 8:1- 11:1
- *“Counsel Concerning Public Worship: Practicing Public Prayer”* 11:2-16
- *“Counsel Concerning Public Worship: Observing the Lord’s Supper”*
11:17-34
- *“Counsel Concerning Public Worship: Exercising Spiritual Gifts”* 12:1-14:40
- *“Counsel Concerning the Resurrection* 15:1-58
- *“Counsel Concerning Offerings/ Conclusion* 16:1-24

Appendix C- *We Are God's Church: An Affirmation of Faith*

We are God's Church—

*Chosen by the Father
before the foundation of the world,
Redeemed by the Son
through his shed blood on the cross,
Sealed by the Holy Spirit
to be set apart as God's special possession.*

Ephesians 1:3-14

We are God's Church—

*Chosen and called out to be his holy people
who declare his praises to the world around us.*

1 Peter 2:9-11

We are God's church—

*With God as our Father,
we are children in his family, secure in his love.*

Romans 8:14-17; 1 John 3:1-3

*With Jesus as our Head,
we are members of his body,
reflecting his truth and love to one another.*

Ephesians 4:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 12:14-27

*With the Spirit as our Unifier,
we are fitted together
as the living stones of his temple
radiating his glory through our unity and service.*

Ephesians 2:21, 22; Ephesians 4:3-6; 1 Peter 2:4,5

We are God's church—

*Not a place, but a people,
Not a building, but a body,
Not a business, but a bride—
Whom Christ is making holy and blameless
to prepare us for the great banquet feast
when we are united with him in heaven...
because we are God's church!*

Ephesians 5:26, 27; Revelation 19:6-9

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Vita

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Kevin was born in Pottstown, PA on December 9, 1958. He graduated from the Boyertown Area High School in 1976. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy with a minor in Religious Studies from West Chester University, and his Master of Divinity degree from the International School of Theology in San Bernardino, CA. Kevin also received the President's Award for Creative Biblical Thinking in recognition for academic excellence. He will receive his Doctor of Ministry Degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, MA in May 2007.

Kevin and his wife, Christy, have been married for 24 years. They have four daughters. Ashley is a sophomore at Gordon College in Wenham, MA. Renata is in 12th grade, and Karis is in 9th grade at the Christian School of York. Meredith is being home schooled for 5th grade this year.

Kevin has been the Senior Pastor of the Immanuel Evangelical Church of York since September 2001. He has been active in pastoral ministry for twenty-one years in congregations in New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. His hobbies and interests include sports, outdoor recreation, coaching baseball, reading, drinking Starbucks coffee, and cheering for the Boston Red Sox.